The World's Leading Mystery Magazine

ELLERY QUEEN'S Mystery Magazine

AUGUST 35c

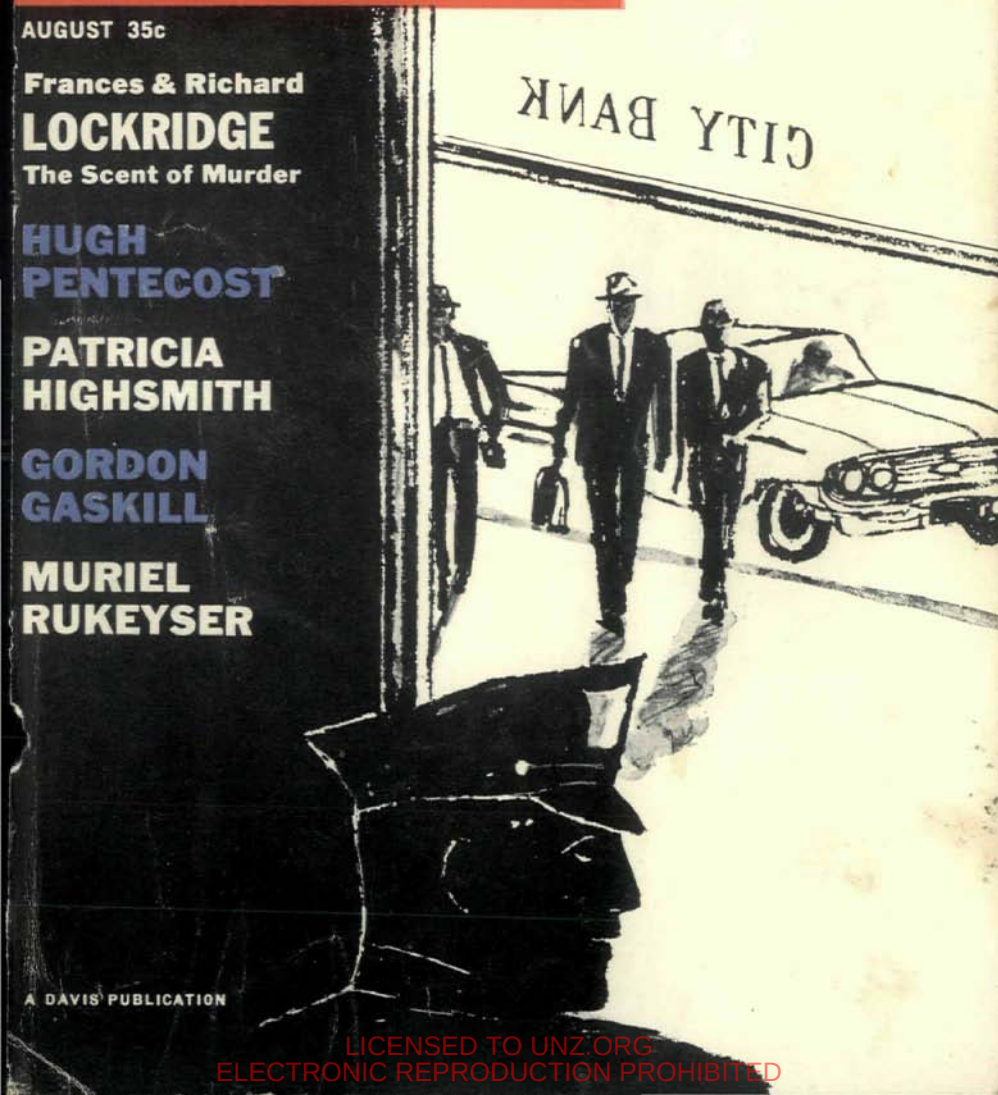
Frances & Richard
LOCKRIDGE
The Scent of Murder

HUGH PENTECOST

PATRICIA HIGHSMITH

GORDON GASKILL

MURIEL RUKEYSER



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The World's Leading Mystery Magazine

ELLERY QUEEN'S *Mystery Magazine*

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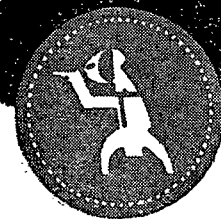

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a new story by

Frances & Richard LOCKRIDGE

EDITORS' FILE CARD

AUTHORS:	Frances & Richard LOCKRIDGE
TITLE:	*The Scent of Murder*
TYPE:	Detective Story
DETECTIVE:	Captain Heimrich of the State Police
LOCALE:	Westchester County, New York
TIME:	The Present
COMMENTS:	*Ronnie Beede, escaped from a psychiatric ward, had already killed twice. The net was closing in around him—but not before murder struck again . . .*

RONNIE BEEDE HAD BEEN FREE for forty-eight hours and he had a gun and he was a killer. Throughout Westchester and Putnam counties people locked their doors against Ronnie Beede.

He had escaped from the psychiatric ward of an upstate hospital and since then he had murdered twice. First he had killed a salesman who had picked him up on the road, and after that a girl of sixteen who had been baby-sitting in a house he had broken into for food and clothes. The police were sure of the first: his fingerprints had been found on the salesman's car, which Beede had abandoned when it ran out of gas. They were not so sure about the girl. But her killing had been needless, wanton, and that looked like Ronnie Beede.

They knew a good deal about Beede—almost everything, except where he was. A big blond man in his middle twenties; a good-looking man with a friendly face and a wide, agreeable smile, and a slow, rather diffident way of speaking. The sort of attractive young man anyone might have picked up, even a person who should have known better. Probably the salesman had been bored and lonely when he stopped for Ronnie on a road above Peekskill. Ronnie had slugged him, then strangled him and thrown his body by the roadside. That was needless, too, but it was Ronnie's way. The gun he had now had

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been in the glove compartment of the salesman's car.

The girl had been killed in Mt. Kisco, and geography as well as wantonness made the police think of Ronnie Beede. If he was working his way home—killing his way home—Mt. Kisco would be on his route—on the route to a small, unpainted farmhouse on a back road between Brewster and Pawling. His mother waited there—a frail woman with a drawn face who had trembled uncontrollably when Captain M. L. Heimrich of the New York State Police spoke to her, although Heimrich spoke gently, believing that Ronnie was no fault of hers. She thought the fault the army's. "He was always a good boy until he went into the army. The best son a mother ever—" She had been unable to finish.

There was no telling whose fault Ronnie was, but that was not Heimrich's problem—except that, as well as a policeman, he was a man, and mankind worried him. It was easy enough to put a word to Ronnie. He was a paranoic, knowing the world was against him and killing to defend himself against the world. *Mad Killer Strikes Again*—that was the way a New York City tabloid had headlined it that July morning, after the girl's body had been found. The fault? It was not for the police to decide. Their problem was to catch Beede—before he killed again.

The news came on the car radio at four thirty-one in the afternoon. The car, with Sergeant Charles Forniss driving, was two miles east of Katonah on NY 22, heading west toward the barracks at Hawthorne. Forniss set the siren going and the car leaped—leaped through Katonah, with other cars flinching to the curbs; screamed its way north and west for three miles and a little more, and onto a side road and then, almost at once, up a winding driveway between trees.

Forniss knew the way. The Franklins were well-known thereabouts—Arthur Franklin was on the town planning board and the library committee, and Martha Franklin had been active in the garden club, although less lately than in the recent past. It was hard to believe that a thing like this could happen to people like the Franklins.

Their house was isolated, deep in ancient trees. It was probably the isolation and quiet that had brought murder there.

Heimrich and Forniss were the first of the police to arrive. The front door of the house stood open; the screen which had shielded it had been gashed near the knob. In the square hall beyond the door, Arthur Franklin was sitting on a bench—sitting with his wrists resting on his knees and his hands dangling between them. He sat staring at the floor, which was in deep shadow. When Heimrich and Forniss crossed the porch, he got up

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slowly, heavily, then came to the door and looked at them with almost blank eyes.

"He killed her," Arthur Franklin said. He spoke, Heimrich thought, as if for sometime he had been saying the same words over and over in his mind. "For no reason at all. Anything he wanted—" Franklin did not finish; he pressed the palm of his right hand against his forehead and moved it slowly up his forehead. The hand ground dirt into the skin. He was a handsome man—heavy and in his late forties, but still handsome. He wore stained walking shorts and a blue shirt; he had been kneeling in earth and his knees were grimed with it. "For no reason at all," he repeated, and stepped back so that they could enter the hall.

Martha Franklin lay on the floor, on her back, in blood. She had been a tall woman and looked older by some years than her husband. The dead face was bony—even in death, austere and dominating. Up to now, Heimrich thought, looking down at her, she probably had always got her way. She must, Heimrich found himself thinking, have died in furious surprise that she—*she*—could thus be flouted. She had been shot through the head, from close in. She had fallen with her head toward a marble fireplace.

"I was down in the garden," Franklin said, without being asked. "If only I had been here—" He shook his head, then looked hard at Heimrich. "How many more are you going to let him kill?"

"Him?" Heimrich said.

"This—maniac," Franklin said. "The one in the newspapers. On the radio. What's his name?"

"Beede," Heimrich said. "Ronnie Beede."

"We'd have given him whatever he wanted," Franklin said. "Food, money—anything he wanted. To kill somebody for—for *nothing*." He looked down at the body of his wife, stunned, moving his head slowly from side to side.

There was no use staying in the hall where death was so visible. There was nothing immediately to be done there, and the others were on their way. Through the open door they could hear sirens, not far off. Gently, Heimrich guided the heavy man from the hall into a living room. "You were in the garden?" Heimrich said. "You didn't see anyone?"

"I heard somebody running," Franklin said. "And a shot. I didn't pay any attention to the shot. You hear them in the country, and it sounded a long way off. But then—somebody running off through the field. From the house." He stopped and stood shaking his head, as if in disbelief. "I was staking up the tomatoes," he said. He repeated it—"staking up the tomatoes"—as if this incongruity was monstrous.

"The garden," Heimrich said. "It's some distance from the house, I take it?"

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"Over the hill," Franklin said. "Only place there's enough sun. If —if I'd only been here with her. I —" He shook his head quickly, this time as if to shake shadows out of his mind. "She was resting, probably," he went on. "Heard him break in—you saw the screen?"

"Yes," Heimrich said.

"Went to see what it was," Franklin said. "She would have. She was like that. And he shot her. Just like that. For no reason at all. For no—"

"Now Mr. Franklin," Heimrich said. "The man you heard running. He ran past the garden?"

"Through the next field," Franklin said. "I was kneeling down among the vines. Had my back to the field. By the time I looked around he was gone. It was this man Beede, wasn't it?"

Heimrich said he supposed so. It had been done Ronnie Beede's way —wantonly, for no reason. "We're doing all—" he began, and stopped, because Arthur Franklin was swaying on his feet. Heimrich moved quickly and caught Franklin around the shoulders. For an instant the man was dead weight in his grasp. Heimrich helped him to a chair, lowered him into it, holding the heavy man's wrists as he let him down, being pulled forward by Franklin's weight. Heimrich's nostrils were pinched.

"All right," Franklin said, after a moment. "It's nothing. Dizzy. Too much sun, maybe. Too much—everything."

"Naturally," Heimrich soothed. He heard a car door slam outside, heard feet on the porch. And then brakes squealed, and another car door opened and closed. The others were showing up. "Just sit and rest a minute, Mr. Franklin," Heimrich said, and went back to the hall.

They were getting cameras out. That came first. "Beede?" Forniss said, and Heimrich said, "Looks like it, doesn't it, Charlie? Mrs. Franklin surprised him and he killed her. And ran. Down past Mr. Franklin's garden. I'll go and have a look."

He went along a path, in the shade first, over a rise and down again, and then into the sun—the full sun a garden needs. It was a fine neat garden. Some day, Heimrich thought, he would like to have a garden like it—with bush limas ripening in long rows and tomato vines tied carefully to stakes. To his right, as he faced the garden, there was a stone fence, and beyond it a field of tall grass and blueberry bushes.

Heimrich went into Mr. Franklin's vegetable garden and squatted among the tomatoes. Mr. Franklin kept the vines trained to three stems by pinching off unwanted shoots. The stubs of many such were on the ground, withering in the sun. Franklin had missed some and Heimrich snipped two or three between thumb and forefinger. He smelled his fingers, nodded, and walked back to the house. He went

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through the now crowded hall and into the living room. Franklin sat where Heimrich had left him.

Heimrich went up to the seated man, lifted Franklin's right hand, and looked at it, while Franklin stared at him, then began to pull his hand away. The hand was grimed. Heinrich bent down and smelled it.

"What the hell?" Franklin said, and his voice was no longer dull—it was sharp, alert.

"Now Mr. Franklin," Heimrich said. "You say you were working with the tomato plants?"

"I told you—" Franklin began, then stopped.

"Smell your hands yourself," Heimrich said. "Go on, Mr. Franklin."

But Franklin did not smell his hands. He began to stand up.

"No," Heimrich said, and Franklin sank back.

"Then," Heimrich said, "smell *my* fingers, Mr. Franklin," and held thumb and forefinger in front of Franklin's nose. "Very pungent ódor tomato vines have, haven't they?" Heimrich said. "Quite unmistakabe. When you handle them, the odor gets on your hands and stays. Until you wash the sap off, and then the water you wash in turns green. You know that, naturally. But—*it's not on your hands now, is it?* I noticed that when you were dizzy and I was helping you. No tomato smell. But—you hadn't washed your hands, had you? You dirtied them, yes—and your knees too—to show you'd just come from the garden. Took advantage of the fact there was a killer on the loose and—*why did you kill her, Mr. Franklin?* Merely because she was hard to live with? Or did she have the money?"

Franklin did not answer. But something happened to his eyes.

That sort of thing occurs now and then—a flaw in a lie is exposed and the lie falls, and the liar with it. Franklin had been careless, Heimrich pointed out to Sergeant Forniss somewhat later. If he had said he was in the garden hoeing beans he might easily have got away with it.

They trapped Ronnie Beede that evening. The trap was his mother's house and they let him walk into it. He was on his knees, with his face buried in his mother's lap, when they took him. He was shaking so hard that the frail woman shook with him.

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a new story by

EDITORS' FILE CARD

AUTHOR: **PATRICIA HIGHSMITH**

TITLE: ***The Thrill Seeker***

TYPE: Crime Story

LOCALE: New York City

TIME: The Present

COMMENTS: *Andrew Forster had developed a curious hobby. But a hobby as curious as Andy's can become dangerous, and a dangerous hobby can become more than a revolting pastime.*

ANDREW FORSTER, THIRTY-SEVEN, married, the father of a fourteen-year-old girl, and a topnotch salesman of the Marvel Vacuum Company, had developed a curious hobby. He would call up women, give them a long, slow, subtly flattering line, make a date with them (sometimes it took two dates, if the woman did not permit him on the first date to call for her at her house), and then he would rob them of some possession small enough to be put in his pocket.

Sometimes it was no more than a silver cigarette lighter or a ring of middling value that he picked up from a dressing table; but it satisfied him, and after his petty thievery, he dropped the women. He was never, so far as he knew, suspected. His courteous, serious, intelligent manner put him above reproach. After all, his job was selling, and the first thing a salesman had to do in order to get into a living-room to demonstrate a vacuum was to sell himself. This Andy Forster could do superbly well.

And of course he picked his victims with care. They were all women with careers or professions, and all were single, though this last did not matter too much. One had been an actress, one a fairly well-known journalist, another a dress

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designer. He had boned up on their careers and current activities so that he could sing their praises in his very first telephone conversation.

To the dress designer he had spoken about his fourteen-year-old daughter who, he said, was determined to be a dress designer herself, and though he realized it was an unusual request from a total stranger, could he possibly meet her and talk with her for fifteen minutes or so somewhere? He had made sure he had seen the actress's last play and could therefore talk about it with conviction. He had especially admired the journalist's piece on such and such, and had some flattering questions to ask her. He had never been refused an appointment.

His appearance, when he arrived at their doors or when he stood up with a quizzical expression, not quite sure they were the right women, to greet them in a tearoom or a cocktail lounge, was even more reassuring than his voice on the telephone. He was about five ten, a trifle overweight though not soft, conservatively dressed, and his cheeks were pink and firm, suggestive of clean living. His manner was quiet and soft-spoken, but not unpleasantly so. He gave an impression of being somewhat in awe of the particular woman he was with, or at least of being extremely respectful of her. His conversation was always intelligent, since Andy kept himself well informed on many subjects.

He always had his car with him, a big impressive company car but with no insignia of the company on it, and at the end of the tea or the two-drink-apiece cocktail date (that was all women dared to have with a strange man, it seeemed) he had so won the women's confidence that they invariably accepted his offer to drive them back to their apartments or to wherever they were going. His robberies were usually committed during the second meeting. In two instances he had made third dates, after the robberies, as a kind of challenge to fate. But the missing articles had not even been mentioned.

"How do you know so much?" they would ask him, fascinated by his explanation of the failure of the Gallipoli campaign in the first World War.

Then Andy would tell them that he had been going to be a professor of history, or of physics, or of geography, or of oceanography, but had had his mind changed for him by his wife, who had said (when he was twenty-two and just about to get his degree) that she would never be happy as the wife of a college professor, because their salaries were so low.

This pitiful story, told with manly understatement and absence of resentment, made women feel extremely sympathetic, and they loudly decried the selfishness and

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pettiness of their own sex. They were different, of course. Just see how they could talk on an equal footing with a man, how this man listened when they spoke, and seemed to value them as a person, not just a female to jump into bed with. The farthest Andy went in familiarity was to touch their elbows as they crossed a street or got into or out of his car.

As a matter of fact, an injury Andy had received in the Korean War had made him impotent, and psychologically also he had given women up now, beginning with his wife who had in a sense given Andy up a decade ago. His wife, Juliette, was home to cook his dinner every evening, but as likely as not she went out after dinner to work at some hospital—volunteer work or paid work, it didn't matter to Juliette. She was a registered nurse, slender, quietly efficient, with the energy of two men in her short, compact body. Juliette never talked about her work. It was simply her whole world and she could not wait to get back to it after her minimal attentions to her husband and daughter.

Andy was bright enough to realize that he hated women, though he had not realized it until after the Korean injury. That incident had made him realize that he had hated Juliette and very likely all other women for nearly the past ten years. He had once loved Juliette, but she had let him down—stupidly and without mercy let him down. And yet she was the mother of his daughter Martha, whom he adored.

In the evenings, every evening, Andy read, and he read until nearly 3:00 A.M. He was a poor sleeper. Sometimes even between 3:00 and 7:00 A.M. when he got up, it seemed he did not sleep at all, merely rested his eyes beneath closed lids. Twelve years ago he had bought an Encyclopaedia Britannica, and he was 80% through it now. Usually he read this in the evenings, propping the heavy volumes against the wall as he lay on his stomach in bed. When Juliette finally crawled into the bed on the opposite side, he simply tried to ignore her.

The loot from his encounters with women he put into a leather brief case stamped with the Marvel Vacuum Company's trademark, which he kept at the back of his bottom drawer. Nothing was more certain than that Juliette would never look into that drawer: his bottom drawers for as long as he could remember had amassed, as if by their own power of attraction, unmended socks, shirts with missing buttons, shorts too worn out to wear but not worn out enough to be discarded, pajama tops with no pants and vice versa. Andy did his own button-sewing and sock-mending, when he troubled to do it.

The brief case now contained

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the actress' wrist watch, a sculptress' ring, the dress designer's silver twelve-inch ruler, the journalist's Javanese cigarette box studded with garnets, a thin gold necklace from a violinist of the New York Philharmonic, a pretty little silver pencil whose owner he had forgotten, a perfume bottle of blue glass enclosed in filigreed silver, a topaz ring he had picked up from the top of a toilet tank in the bathroom of a slightly tipsy night-club singer who hadn't minded drinking a good deal in her own apartment, a Tanagra figurine that he kept wrapped in a handkerchief, and an antique silver flask of pocket size.

Andy had in mind giving many of these things to Martha when she would be twenty-one or so and out of college, and perhaps even out of the house, if she were married by then. He would bestow the presents slowly over the years, in a way that would excite no suspicion in Juliette, he hoped. She paid so little attention to what he did that it was hard to imagine her being suspicious of anything.

After six weeks of selling vacuums all day and coming home to a more or less silent wife, Andy would begin to feel restless and start planning a new adventure. One afternoon in mid-May he entered a telephone booth in the Bronx to call a woman anthropologist named Rebecca Wooster, whom he had seen one Sunday afternoon on a television program. She had just returned from the West Indies and Central America, where she had been making studies. Andy had found her number in the telephone book, but the number had been changed, the operator said, and she gave him the new one, which he made a note of, and dialed. A woman's voice answered, and when Andy ascertained that she was Miss Wooster, he continued in his usual style.

"My name is Robert Garrett." (He never gave his real name.) "I hope you'll forgive me for calling you out of the blue like this, but I saw you on television a few Sundays ago, and I've been—well, I've been thinking ever since about some of the things you said. I'm something of an amateur anthropologist myself, and I'm working on a theory just now using psychological rather than racial grouping. I'd like very much to ask you a few questions that is, if you've got half an hour to spare—and I'd be very grateful to you if you could possibly spare the time to look over the outline I've made. It's just a matter of three pages."

He went on for another few minutes in a slow, earnest way, giving her time to respond now and then with a word or two that showed she was following him, in fact listening with interest. He had seen in the television show that she was a warm and friendly woman, patient with the questions

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that had been asked her at the end of the program, some of which had not been very pertinent. Finally, he apologized for taking so much of her time with the telephone call, and put in a modest plea that she would grant him a personal interview, however brief.

"Why, I think I can manage that," she said in her slow, pleasant voice. "How would tomorrow be? Say around five thirty?"

"That would be fine," Andy replied. "Really I'm very honored, Miss Wooster." He asked for her address, she gave it to him, and they said goodbye cordially.

Andy was punctual the following afternoon, bringing with him a folded map of the world on which he had drawn various circles, some overlapping, to indicate his "psychologically similar groups." Most of it had no validity at all, he knew, but he had made the circles as best he could after consulting a few sociology books. He also had an "outline" of three typed pages.

Miss Wooster lived on the fourteenth floor—actually the thirteenth of a rather formal building on Park Avenue. She received him in a foyer as soon as he stepped out of the elevator. Andy introduced himself with a little bow, and they went into a large room that looked like a living-room except for a massive desk near the window.

"You say you're not an anthropologist by profession," Miss Wooster began after they had seated themselves on the sofa.

"No. I work for a company that compiles reference books for the Public Library not a very interesting job, I'm afraid, but it gives me a chance to read a lot." He got up with a murmured apology and walked in an awestruck way toward her bookshelves on which stood, among the books, a dozen or more small sculptures and jeweled pieces of primitive art. "I hope you don't mind," he apologized. "These fascinate me, and I've never seen anything like these except in a glass case in a museum."

She got up, smiling with pleasure at his interest, and they talked and examined the pieces for fifteen minutes. What interested Andy most was a Mayan ornament of hammered gold, all a-tinkle with small gold pendants, each weighted with a tiny green stone. It was small enough to fit into his jacket pocket, and he had only to wait for the proper time to whisk it there, perhaps when Miss Wooster would turn to answer the telephone on the desk. Andy hated to resort to asking for a glass of water, though sometimes he had done so. At any rate, if he did have to ask for water, there did not seem to be any servant about who might get it for him.

"Well, let me see the outline you were talking about," Miss Wooster said, seating herself in a chair

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near the book shelves. "I have an appointment at six, I'm sorry to say, but I couldn't arrange it any later."

Andy glanced at his watch, saw that it was 5:47, and said, "I'll make it as brief as I can." He crossed the room for his brief case, and from among pamphlets concerning Marvel Vacuums removed his map of the world and his three-page outline. Then he took a deep breath and began, slowly, but in a way that did not permit Miss Wooster to interrupt him.

A smile of incredulity, perhaps of amusement, was growing on her lips.

"You may think—I suppose I am incompetent to make such a study," he finished.

"No. It's quite interesting. I admire your enthusiasm. She had looked over his outline. "But I think you're wrong about the Aionus and the Chinese. I mean, the similarity you spoke of . . ."

Andy listened carefully as she talked and as the minutes ticked away. He wondered if he could get the Mayan piece on his first visit and if not, could he persuade her to let him see her again. Immediately, he forced the doubt from his mind. To doubt was fatal. At any rate, she was not telling him that his idea was *absolutely* off the beam, or unworthy of being written about.

A bell rang in the hall.

"Oh, dear, that must be my appointment," Miss Wooster said, getting up. "It's a bit early. Excuse me, Mr. Garrett."

Andy stood up, smiling. He couldn't have planned it better. Miss Wooster went into the foyer to speak over the telephone to the caller downstairs, and Andy quickly pocketed the Mayan piece, making sure that the gap it left would not be noticed until he was out of the house.

When Miss Wooster came in again, he was slowly putting his papers back into his brief case.

"I've overstayed," he said sadly.

"Oh, no. But I do have to see this person now, because she's coming to interview me." She smiled and held out her hand. "It's been such a pleasure meeting you. I hope you'll go on with your book. You say you've written a hundred pages?"

"Yes." Andy was now moving toward the foyer.

"If you hit any snags, don't hesitate to call me. I'm always glad to talk about my favorite subject."

"Thank you—"

The elevator door had slid open. A tall woman of about thirty-five came slowly out and looked at Andy in a puzzled way. He looked at her in the same way, and then realized with horror that she was the journalist from whom he had stolen—what was it?

"Well! Mr.—O'Neill, isn't it?" she asked.

"No," said Miss Wooster. "This

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is Mr. Garrett. Mr. Garrett, Miss Holquist. Or—have you met before?"

"*Yes,*" said Miss Holquist.

Andy knew he couldn't get away with it. Even though his face was more or less ordinary, Myra Holquist had seen him on two occasions not more than six months ago. "Sorry," he said. "My name is Garrett. I don't know why I told you it was O'Neill. Just to be adventurous, I guess. Or I think I was trying out my pen name. There are enough writers named Garrett."

Myra Holquist nodded, as if she were thinking of something else. "How's the journalism going? Weren't you interested in writing something about the passing of the vacant lot in the lives of New York children? Something like that?

Now Miss Wooster was looking at him oddly.

"Something like that," Andy admitted weakly. "Well, I must be going."

He felt utterly defeated, shamed, humiliated. All his style was gone. He rang for the elevator, which unfortunately had closed and disappeared.

"Just a minute—Mr. Garrett. Excuse me, Miss Wooster. I wondered why you disappeared so suddenly," Miss Holquist continued to Andy. "It didn't by any chance have anything to do with a Javanese cigarette box?"

"I don't know what you mean," Andy said, frowning with feigned perplexity.

She gave him a bitter smile. "But you look as if you do. Miss Wooster, have you known this man very long?"

"Why, no," Miss Wooster replied. "Just this afternoon. He—"

"Then before he leaves, I think you'd be wise to look around your house and see if anything's missing."

Miss Wooster gasped, and Andy gritted his teeth and prayed for the elevator door to slide open. But he couldn't even hear the thing coming.

"I mean it, Miss Wooster," said Miss Holquist in a tone of command.

Some remnant of pride, perhaps even the beginning of a plan, inspired Andy to motion the elevator away as its door slid open. "Thanks, not just yet," he said to the elevator man, and turned like one about to be executed and followed Miss Wooster back into the living-room.

Myra Holquist also came in from the foyer.

"Why—my gold Mayan piece!" Miss Wooster exclaimed. "It's gone!" And she looked at Andy with wide, frightened eyes. "D-did you see it?" she stammered.

"Give it to her, Mr. O'Neill or Mr. Garrett," said Miss Holquist coolly.

Then Andy struck her in the

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side of the head with all the force of his muscular right arm, and she fell to the floor. He knelt and throttled her, bumping her head again and again on the floor, oblivious of Miss Wooster's screams, of her ineffectual efforts to pull him away. Nothing that could be described as a thought was in Andy's mind during those few violent seconds, only a feeling, a consciousness that the woman he was attacking had betrayed him, stripped him of decency, had filled him with an intolerable shame. Her overly made-up face symbolized to him all that he despised in the female sex—its coldness, mercilessness, indifference.

"Shut up!" Andy blazed at Miss Wooster as he got to his feet. But when he saw her retreating from him, he became frightened himself. She had become silent now, but he was afraid someone might appear at any moment in response to her screams. She kept retreating and he kept walking toward her. He wanted a rope, a gag—anything to tie her up until he could get away.

"Where's the bedroom? Go in the bedroom," he ordered. He saw the bedroom behind her and there was a key in its ornate door. "Get in there."

She went in obediently.

"And here. You can have this," he said, pulling the Mayan piece from his jacket pocket. He laid it on the top of a chest just inside the bedroom door. "I'm sorry, really sorry." Inarticulate, he jerked his head to one side in shamed apology, pulled the door to, and locked it, leaving the key in it.

Then he dashed back to the living-room for his brief case—Miss Holquist was motionless—and not daring to leave by the elevator he looked for the kitchen. Just as he had hoped, it had a delivery entrance, and outside this door he found a service elevator and some stairs.

He took the stairs. Down and down, thirteen unlucky floors. It put him out in a cellar, unlighted except for a little daylight that showed through an open door. He went out this door, up some iron steps, and he was on 78th Street, between Park and Lexington, only fifteen feet from his car. Slowly he walked to the car, feeling in his pocket for his keys.

He lived on one of those peculiarly gloomy streets of apartment houses near the Manhattan approach of the George Washington Bridge. The bars of that neighborhood were gloomy, too, but Andy went into one and had two quick shots of rye to steady himself before he went home. For once he was grateful that Juliette scarcely spoke to him and never looked him fully in the face. And Martha, he remembered, was having supper with a school friend tonight, and was going to spend the evening with the friend doing homework.

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That night Andy did not sleep at all. He was haunted by Miss Wooster's muffled cries through her bedroom door. Had there been a telephone in the room? How soon had she been able to get out? *Mr. Garrett, Mr. O'Neill,* she had called and called.

Andy turned in his bed with shame and thought of the cache of treasures in his bottom drawer. It was as if he had never seen his revolting pastime objectively before—he who had always considered himself a fairly intelligent man!

The next morning Andy bought a paper at the newsstand near his office, where he checked in every morning at 8:45. He found nothing in it about the nightmare of the last evening, but he was not sure if the morning papers could have picked up the story in time. He sold one vacuum cleaner to an elderly lady who had an apartment full of singing canaries.

Then he bought an afternoon paper, which said that Myra Holquist, the well-known journalist, had been throttled to death in the apartment of Rebecca Wooster, the eminent anthropologist, whom she had come to interview. Like the encounter itself yesterday, it seemed fantastic and unreal, until he went on to read the doctor's statement and also the description of "Robert Garrett or O'Neill" given by Miss Wooster. It was him to a T, a portrait of himself in words.

But a *murderer!* Murder was something Andy had not bargained for.

He knew what the police would do first: look for a Robert Garrett or an O'Neill answering his description, not find any (Andy hoped they would not find any), then a man of his description connected with any company that compiled reference books for the Public Library. Then they would start looking for a man of his description in the streets, anywhere. And maybe one day—

It crossed Andy's mind to turn himself in, and yet the murder, to him, seemed such an accident, such a piece of bad luck, that he felt he deserved better than to give himself into the merciless custody of the law. So he steeled himself to live with the awful fact that another person, a woman, had witnessed his crime and could, if she ever spotted him, put an end to his present way of life. The brief case of stolen articles in the bottom of his drawer he could not even touch now. Merely the thought of it was enough to paralyze any action he might have taken to get rid of it.

Six months went by. Andy lost a little weight, but it was so gradual that neither Juliette nor anyone at his office made a remark about it. He could not look a policeman in the face on the street and he could not get over the habit of glancing quickly at all the faces that came flooding out from any opened elevator. The one time he

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and Juliette had gone to the theatre (Juliette's request on her birthday), the intermissions in the lobby had been hell for him.

And then Andy read in the newspaper that Rebecca Wooster, forty-nine, had succumbed to a heart attack while at work in Ceylon. His reaction to this was very slow, covering a period of three days, at the end of which he took the brief case from his bottom drawer and dropped it from the George Washington Bridge.

After this he felt better, and he expected that he would feel better and better as time went on. He did sleep better for a while, and then his sleep began to grow worse again. He developed circles under his eyes, permanent circles of purple.

Tossing in his bed one night, sleepless, he knew what was the matter. He had no specific enemy now, no one who shared the knowledge of his guilt. He had only himself.

For weeks now he had fought against a compulsion to confess, realizing what it would mean to his daughter and even to Juliette. But he could not convince himself that he was not behaving more heinously by keeping his secret, his unpunished crime, to himself. After all, he was a member of society, and so were his daughter and his wife.

So one cold afternoon in February, Andy went into a police station in the East Fifties and gave himself up. He said that he was the Robert Garrett, alias O'Neill, who last May had throttled Myra Holquis to death in the apartment of the late Rebecca Wooster.

His eyelids twitched, as they did habitually now, and he realized that he did not sound very convincing. But he was not prepared for the stone wall of disbelief that confronted him in that police station. A high-ranking officer questioned him in detail for several minutes, called another station for a check on the description of Garrett-O'Neill, and even then expressed his doubt.

"Have you ever been in a mental institution?" the officer asked.

"No," Andy answered.

Another officer of rank arrived and Andy repeated his story, adding now the details of his petty larcenies. But somehow his memory had deserted him. He could not remember more than one name of all the women he had pilfered from—Irene Cassidy, the dress designer. But what had he taken from her? He could descibe several of the articles he had stolen, but he could not produce them, he explained, because he had dropped them off the George Washington Bridge two weeks ago.

"Call Irene Cassidy," the new officer said.

Miss Cassidy worked in her own studio, and she was in. The officer explained the situation la-

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boriously—as if he were trying deliberately to muddle the woman, Andy thought. He could tell from the officer's words that he was getting negative replies to everything, so Andy asked if he could speak with her. The telephone was passed over to him.

"Hello, Miss Cassidy," Andy said. "I can't remember the name I used when I saw you, but I asked to talk to you because I had a fourteen-year-old daughter who wanted to be a dress designer. Remember that? It must have been—I suppose over a year ago." Maybe it had been two years ago.

"Well—I might remember if I saw you," Miss Cassidy replied, "but I see a lot of people who want to talk to me because they or somebody they know wanted to be dress designers."

"You didn't notice that something was missing—after I saw you that time?"

"Missing? What?"

"Some small thing from your studio—or your desk—I don't remember exactly."

"The guy's nuts," murmured a voice behind him.

"Can you come down to this station? Please?" Andy pleaded.

Miss Cassidy did not want to be bothered. Andy asked her to wait a moment, then passed the telephone to an officer and told him to do what he could to persuade her to come to the station. The Officer was more successful.

There was a painful wait of forty-five minutes, during which time they let Andy sit on a bench from which he could easily have slipped out the door and into the street. At last Miss Cassidy arrived, small and chic, in a short fur wrap, a hat of bird feathers. The police led her to Andy and asked her if she had ever seen him before. Miss Cassidy looked blank.

"I've lost a little weight," Andy said to her. "Not much, but it might make a difference. We talked about Yves St. Laurent, remember? The talent of youth and all that?"

It was hopeless. There was a run-down, somewhat shabby look about him now. He was no longer the robust, self-confident man she had talked with a year ago, or perhaps two years ago.

Miss Cassidy shook her head, and looked at the officers. "I hope I'm not standing in the way of justice or anything like that, but to the best of my recollection I never saw this man before. Is he trying to save himself from something?"

"No, he's trying to confess to a murder," the officer said with a smile. "A sensation seeker. We get a lot of 'em like this. He's throwing in a lot of other things about robberies all over town."

Now Miss Cassidy looked positively frightened of him. Women, Andy thought. Why should she have forgotten? It was not even deliberate, he thought, only an un-

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conscious blow she had struck in the eternal battle of the sexes.

"We checked with the company he works for," the officer continued. "He hasn't missed a day's work in the nine years he's been there. Hey, is there a psychiatrist or something your company uses?" he asked Andy. "I think you better have a checkup, Forster. Maybe you've been working too hard lately."

A few minutes later Andy was released and out on the street again.

He went into a subway and threw himself on the tracks in front of an onrushing train.

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EDITORS' FILE CARD

AUTHOR:	**ERNEST HARRISON**
TITLE:	***It's So Easy***
TYPE:	Detective Story
DETECTIVE:	Professor Kettner
LOCALE:	United States
TIME:	The Present
COMMENTS:	*Another fascinating investigation by the genial Professor—with a "gimmick" that may be a genuine "first" in mystery fiction.*

PROFESSOR KETTNER WAS DICTATING a treatise on the War of 1812 when a large man marched into the study. The Professor noted the aggressive jowls and bulging chest which petered out into an incongruously flat stomach.

The man strode across to the desk and held out a friendly hand. Kettner observed the same physical inconsistency—an enormous palm unexpectedly tapering into strong, slender fingers. Clearly, he thought, a pianist.

"Yes?" he inquired politely.

"I'm Doctor Alastair Munn of the Saxton General. I've heard by the grapevine that you're something of a detective."

"Simply good luck," replied Professor Kettner modestly. "In any case, haven't I seen your own name recently in quite a similar context?"

"Correct!" boomed Doctor Munn, looking with pride at the pretty Miss Potts, the Professor's secretary. "I've had a few successes, but this one's off my wave length. To be honest, I don't really know where to begin."

"Begin at the end, work backward to the beginning, then stop."

"The end's simple. I'm sheltering a man named Peter Church. He's a murderer."

"A murderer?" gasped Miss Potts, hoping that she would not be sent from the room.

"Yes. At least, the police think he's a murderer, but I don't. I want you to find out who is right."

"A good ending, Doctor," said Professor Kettner. "Now what about the contributing causes?"

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"The murder took place in Quebec City. Peter Church had a room on the sixteenth floor of the Hotel Granton. He's an old friend of mine—the oldest and best. The sort of man who is always trying to help the underdog."

"Haven't I also heard his name before?"

"Probably. He's Principal of the Saint Vincent Home for the Deaf and Dumb. All the best methods, old and new. More successes under his belt than anyone I know of in his field. On the second floor of the same hotel another man had a room —Bertie Love, destined to be a corpse. An appropriate name because Bertie Love walked off with Peter's wife about five years ago."

"That being the motive?"

"As the police see it. As I see it just nonsense. Peter was hurt at the time, deeply hurt, but he's quite incapable of bearing a grudge against anyone. He'd find good points in the Devil himself."

"Strange he was in the same hotel as Love."

"Not at all. My guess is that Love was following Peter in order to tap him of some cash. But we'll never know that because someone bumped off Love right away. Bertie was about as bad a character as Peter is the opposite, and, Love must made many enemies."

"The police might consider you prejudiced about your friend. After all, Peter Church had not only motive but opportunity."

"I'm not blaming the police. They did a fine job, and I can't criticize them for tagging Peter—especially when his alibi folded."

"That's bad," agreed Professor Kettner. "My one ewe-lamb of a success came off because I was able to break an alibi."

Doctor Munn passed his enormous hand across a bald pate, his slender fingers beating an uncertain tattoo. "Bertie Love's room was at the back of the hotel, overlooking a small yard where some rubbish bins were kept. At twenty minutes past eight p.m., two residents were yacking outside the elevator door when Bertie Love came past them, wished them a slightly tipsy good night, and then directly entered his room by the only door to it.

"Three minutes later one of the yacking guests noticed a cuff link on the passage floor and thought that Bertie Love may have dropped it. He went to Love's room and entered. Bertie's body lay on the floor —a nasty mess. The side of his head had been smashed in with a large granite doorstop—part of the room's furnishings."

"Fingerprints?"

"Nary a one. The murderer must have skipped out of the window and away. No other evidence at all —not a smidgen. They soon got hold of poor Peter. When he heard the time of the murder, he said he had a providential alibi. That's what he still calls it—providential."

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"What was his alibi?"

"He said he was watching television at 8:20 in his own room on the sixteenth floor."

Professor Kettner folded one spindly leg over the other and pushed back a lick of red hair which had tumbled over his forehead. "I fail to see—"

The Doctor waved him silent. "This isn't one of those hotels where every room has a TV set. There are only a few, and they were all being faithfully looked at when Love was murdered."

"Was there a set in Bertie Love's room?"

"No."

"Outside antenna?"

"No. Just rabbit's ears. The local station is only a mile or so away."

"I suppose they asked Peter what he was watching."

"They did. He says he was dozing and woke for a few seconds—at exactly the time the murder was being committed. He caught a glimpse of the clock and then looked at the television screen before falling into a deep sleep again. He didnt know what program was on or what it was about. He simply saw a young man's face saying, 'It's so easy . . .'"

"Sounds more like a commercial. Those were the exact words?"

"He has no doubt whatever. That's the whole trouble. The police checked with the television station and they say Peter must have either imagined it, or he's lying. They have only two channels—one in French and one in English. The French Channel didn't have a word of English on all evening."

"The English Channel?"

"They had network trouble and were filling in with a program of cartoons."

"So the police have motive, opportunity, and a false alibi—and you still think he's innocent?"

"Sounds bad, I admit, Professor—and don't think I'm not worried stiff in case the lad *did* do it. These quiet saints sometimes go beserk when faced with a Bertie Love." He looked anxiously at Kettner. "Will you—?"

The Professor turned to Miss Potts. She looked at the sensitive lines of his strong-boned face and her eyes softened. "I think we ought to help, Mr. Kettner," she said.

The Professor rose from his chair. "Where is he?"

"At my home. He soon spotted the way things were going, and managed to skip out of Canada and come down here to me." Doctor Munn laid his strong hand gently on the Professor's shoulder. "You've got to help me solve this, Kettner. I'm too emotionally involved to think straight. Peter's the finest man I know. When he does a thing, he does it properly—throws himself right into it. If he were teaching a blind man braille, he'd act and think like a blind man.

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You know the type—infinitely too valuable to be lost."

Peter Church rose from the sofa. He was a tall man of about forty-two, with a soft shiny skin. His gentle eyes were filled with goodness. Here, thought Professor Kettner, was the true humanitarian, the sort of man who identified himself with the people he was helping, even if his own suffering was great.

Doctor Munn shouted his greeting like a small boy. "Well, Peter me lad, there's two Sherlocks on the job now. We can't miss!"

Peter Church turned a doubtful glance, and then smiled. "You must be Professor Kettner of Saxton University. I enjoyed your book on the Canadian Yankees. Pleased to meet you, sir."

Professor Kettner sat down. "I'd like some facts first. As I understand it, everything hinges on your alibi. If you were watching television at 8:20, there would not be time for you to get to Bertie Love's room and commit the murder. The alibi—" He paused and his lips moved soundlessly. "It's difficult to remember exact words."

"That's true, sir. I'll admit that I was very bleary and had just came out of a deep sleep. But I definitely remember seeing the clock show 8:20, and the television set."

"What did the young man on the screen look like?"

"I can't remember precisely—just young. Don't forget, I was scarcely awake."

"What sort of voice?"

Peter scratched his head. "You have me completely. It's sort of blank, if you know what I mean."

"What did he say?"

"I can remember that exactly—'It's so easy'. Then I fell asleep again."

Professor Kettner sat silent for a moment longer, and then rose. "I think," he said, "You would be quite incapable of killing a beetle, and certainly incapable of crushing a man's skull with a granite doorstop. One thing is obvious, however—your alibi is wrong, all wrong. You couldn't possibly have heard a young man say, 'It's so easy'."

Two voices rose simultaneously. "Dammit, man," shouted Doctor Munn. "I didn't call you in to *help* the police."

"Sir," said the anguished Peter. "If you think I'm lying—"

Professor Kettner's thin voice captured his audience as it always captured his large university classes. "I said nothing about lying—I merely said the alibi was a lie. In a left-handed sort of way, I think the lie confirms your innocence. The difficulty will be to prove it.

He marched briskly across to the window and drummed on the pane. Then he turned, and said to Peter. "If you were so dead tired, why did you switch the set on?"

Peter looked at him blankly. Finally he spoke. "I hadn't even

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thought of that. It must have been on when I came in."

"What was the program?"

"I don't know. I just slumped down in my chair."

"Then somebody might have switched it on while you were sleeping?"

"Impossible, I'm afraid. I always lock the door. No, it must have been on when I came in, and I was just too tired to notice."

The Professor strode across the room and seized the telephone. "Give me," he ordered, "The Granton Hotel in Quebec City." He turned to Doctor Munn. "My apologies, Doctor. I should have asked you if you were willing to incur a bill for a long-distance call."

Alastair Munn waved his hand. "Delighted, Kettner. Perhaps you can tell me afterward which of us has gone mad."

Ten minutes later the Professor swung round and slapped his hands together. "We're nearly there!" he crowed. "The television set was switched on by the cleaning woman, who forgot to turn it off before she left."

"Why did she forget?"

"The telephone rang before she'd finished cleaning your room. It was for her, but the connection was so bad that, after persevering a few moments, she left the room to use another phone. The call was from her daughter who was having trouble with a new baby. I need hardly say that all thoughts of cleaning and television vanished from the woman's mind, and she was off to play the good grandmother."

Doctor Munn groaned. "Mothers, daughters, babies! What do they have to do with Peter's alibi, man?"

"Everything. I forgot to tell you —*the telephone receiver was on top of the television set.*"

"So?"

"We do two things—hire a film and hand Peter over to the police."

"Are you crazy?" began the Doctor excitedly. "Didn't you say yourself that his alibi was a lie?"

"Correct. And what can be more truthful than an honest lie?"

In the neat projection room of the Saxton Television Station sat five men—Professor Kettner, Alastair Munn, Peter Church, a representative of the Saxton Police Force, and a French-Canadian detective in the United States to take custody of his man.

"All right," said Professor Kettner. "You can start the machine. You needn't bother with the sound —it's the picture I want to see."

Ahead of them a few flickers appeared on a screen, then a film scraped into action. After a minute or so the face of a young man appeared on the screen in close-up. There was a shout from Peter Church. "That's it! That's the man I tell you, he's the one I saw!"

"All right," came the soft Eng-

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lish of the Canadian detective. "We give you fair trial, *mon ami*—have no fear. But pray will you keep calmly."

"I don't think we'll need a trial," said Professor Kettner.

"Monsieur?" returned the detective. "This man simply pretend he see a film which aids his alibi. I do not convince myself at all about this."

"One moment," replied the Professor. "This was the movie shown on the French Channel at the time of the murder. We started at the part which would be on the TV screen at 8:20 p.m."

"So much even a half-wit might guess," said the detective. "You say this movie was in French. But the young man which Mr. Church says he hear, he says he speaks in English. He hear the exact words—'It's so easy'."

"True—but he didn't hear them."

There was a roar of voices, but once more Professor's incisive accent took command. "Be patient. As soon as I met Peter, I felt he was not the sort of man to commit a brutal murder. Suppose he were telling the truth—as he saw it? Quite literally, as he saw it. But the alibi he told to the police was obviously false. Where then could the lie be?"

He began to tick off the points on his fingers as though addressing a class in logic. "He couldn't possibly have been looking at the English Channel—nobody could mistake a cartoon character for the flesh and blood figure of a young man. There being no outside antenna at the hotel, he could not have been watching an American TV station or one in Montreal. Therefore, he was watching the Quebec City French Channel. I use the word *watching* deliberately because I noticed that all his descriptions involved the eye and not the ear. Could it be that he had only *seen* the program, and not heard it?"

"Now," interrupted the Canadian detective, "it is true that I hear everything, as you Americans say. He would for sure know whether he use his eye or his ear. Monsieur, you waste my time, and I must ask you—"

Professor Kettner ignored the interruption with one of his own. "Peter was tired. He admitted that he paid no attention to the set, but fell at once into a deep sleep. He woke—providentially, as he said—for a few seconds, and again did not have time to adjust his faculties.

"The question then occurred to me: was the sound of the TV set on or off? I phoned the hotel and struck oil right away. The cleaning woman had switched on the French Channel while she was working. When the telephone rang, the connection was bad. What would be the very first thing she'd do? Obviously, *turn the sound of the TV off*—remember the phone was on top of the set. As it hap-

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pened, she was still unable to hear well, so she left the room. Thus, when Peter came in, the picture was on, but the sound was not."

"If he saw only the picture, how did he know what the character was saying?"

"Because he was instinctively *lip reading*. He is Principal of one of the leading Deaf and Dumb Institutions in the country. Lip reading is one of the standard methods used by the deaf. More important, as Doctor Munn so aptly said, if Peter were teaching a blind man braille, he'd act and think like a blind man. Naturally, then, he can lip read as well as any of his students."

The Saxton detective spoke for the first time. "I still don't understand, sir, how this film is being shown in French and this man lip reads it in English."

"That's because you've probably never been to Quebec. They like their Hollywood movies as much as anyone. The only difference is that they're dubbed in French."

"Dubbed?"

"Yes. The French dialogue is spoken straight onto the sound track by French actors, synchronized with the mouth movements of the American actors. They do the same with some of the commercials."

"Funny he didn't know he was lip reading and not hearing."

"Not at all. To a lip reader, lip reading becomes second nature—and in this case he was only partially awake. However, I put him to the test during our first conversation. I moved my lips soundlessly to the words 'It's difficult to remember.' He answered me as if I had spoken aloud—pointing out to me that he had been bleary and just come out of a deep sleep."

Doctor Munn cleared his throat. "I can't begin to thank you, Kettner. Let me know if you can use *me* some time."

"I can use you right now," replied Professor. "I've been invited to help with a case that sounds as if it's right down your street—quite unreasonable and utterly mad."

Alastair Munn's lips moved silently and Peter Church, reading them, turned away with a blush.

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EDITORS' FILE CARD

AUTHOR: **GORDON GASKILL**

TITLE: ***Murder in the Mistral***

TYPE: Detective Novelette

DETECTIVES: Inspector Bayard and Tony Marsden

LOCALE: Sablier Island—off Southern France

TIME: Ten years after World War II

COMMENTS: *The story of the Ranger attack on the tiny Mediterranean island came straight from the Pentagon's files. Now a film was being made on the actual site, and both original commanders, German and American, were on hand. But an unknown murderer changed the shooting script.*

EVEN IN THE AUGUST SUNSHINE the violent, cold, dry Mediterranean wind, called the mistral by the French natives, made the beach uncomfortable. I surrendered and picked up my towel and headed for the hotel, the only one on small Sablier Island, off the coast of southern France.

Pierre, the grizzled old fisherman who helped out at the hotel during tourist season, had told me that the mistral always blows three or six or nine days, nothing in between. I was hoping this was a three-dayer and that this was its last day. Aside from driving everyone crazy—Pierre swore that an ax-murderess in Marseilles once got acquitted by blaming mistral jitters—the wind was costing us money, lots of it.

I'm Tony Marsden, script-writer de luxe. We were in France to shoot a movie, a war story called *Attack This Island,* and it was impossible to start until the wind died down.

Our story was based on a real

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World War II incident I'd dug up in the Pentagon's historical section files. Or, better yet, it *was* the incident, exact in nearly every detail, except for the dialogue I'd written. Rennie Rolfe, the director, had insisted on absolute "realism." We were all a little sick of the word by now, but, after all, he had won two Oscars.

When I reached the hotel terrace, Rennie came running to meet me, waving the blue paper rectangle that in France means a telegram.

"Read this, Tony boy!" he beamed. "My big surprise."

The telegram said: ACCEPT TERMS ARRIVING THURSDAY. KONRAD HETZEN.

"Who's Hetzen?" I asked, baffled. "And why all the excitement?"

"The German major!" he crowed. "The real, original guy!"

Our film story, straight and undoctored out of the Army files, was this: The night before the big Allied invasion of southern France on August 15, 1944, sixteen U. S. Rangers were landed on Sablier Island with orders to knock out the big German radar station there.

The attack failed. Either the Germans had been tipped off, or were alert and nervous in general. It was a rugged story, but a great one with all the elements of suspense. The hero was the Ranger leader, an Army captain named Evans, who was captured and tortured, but wouldn't talk. And it had a real heel—a sergeant named Ellsberg, who did talk. He revealed the rendezvous cave where his buddies were hiding, and the Germans wiped them out. It had a French girl, Odette, who was playing house with the German major in charge of the garrison. Actually, she was an Allied agent, passing us all the intelligence she could. She had helped save the captain's life. Every other American was killed—the squealing sergeant, ironically, by American bombs. Our bombers had to come over, after all, when the Rangers failed.

If I'd invented a story like that, the critics would have called it a cloak-and-dagger fairy tale. But it had really happened and we had the Army files, microfilmed, to prove it.

As usual, Rennie Rolfe went overboard for "realism." He would shoot the film nowhere but on Sablier Island itself, and it had to be August, so the weather would be the same. The Army cooperated. They let him pick out some real GI's from a base in France; they rounded up the right guns and other equipment; they lent him the original captain himself as TA—technical adviser—although now he wore silver leaves: Lieutenant Colonal John Evans, U. S. A. His bravery that night had won him a Distinguished Service Cross.

We had even more realism. The German headquarters had been in this same hotel—flattened by our

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bombs, but later rebuilt—and we'd taken all thirty rooms. The owner's wife was none other than Odette herself, now Madame Auguste Roquin, married to the island's richest citizen. He was a good twenty years older than she, but the French don't seem to worry so much about these matters.

Rennie had even toyed with the idea of having both Odette and John Evans play themselves in the film. The ten years hadn't changed either of them very much. But Evans wouldn't allow it. "Trying to save money?" he had laughed. "You know darn' well I can't take outside pay while I'm in the Army." Then, more soberly, "Seriously, no. Frankly, I feel like a fool having the film made at all, but if the Army says so . . ."

As for Odette, I think she'd have liked being in a movie. But her husband must have put his foot down. He didn't say anything to us, but it was obvious he didn't like the whole idea of the film.

So Rennie found other people for the roles—a pert little French girl named Ninon Narbonne for Odette's part and a young American unknown actor, David Douglas, to play the captain. Douglas was picked because he had the same big, husky, slow-moving build that Evans had. He took the "realism" lecture as if his life depended on it. He tagged around after the colonel, trying to pick up his very mannerisms.

And now Rennie had struck the final blow for realism. He had found the original German major.

"It wasn't so hard," he said proudly. He'd had the company's people in Frankfurt check old German army files, still in surprisingly good shape. They showed that the commander of the German detachment on Sablier Island in August, 1944, had been a Major Konrad Hetzen. Personal ads in the larger German newspapers had turned him up.

"And get this!" Rennie laughed. "He's a clerk in a Hamburg travel office now! I wired him an offer as technical assistant for six weeks at about ten times what they pay him. Brother, he snapped at that." Rennie rubbed his hands happily. "Imagine, Tony! We've actually got the real American commander and the real German commander! Both viewpoints on what really happened. I'll bet it has never been done before, at least, not this realistically."

I read the telegram again. "Arriving Thursday. That's today."

He looked at me sharply. "What's the matter?"

"I don't know," I said. "Somehow this doesn't sound so good to me."

Rennie began getting red. "What do you mean?" he demanded.

"Look, Rennie," I said. "To you and me this is only a film. But to a lot of other people here, it was something that really happened—

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and hurt. People got killed. And this major was responsible."

"Are you nuts?" Rennie exploded. "The war's over, remember? This is all history now. People forget. Do you think they're going to pick up clubs and beat a little travel clerk to death now, after ten years?"

"I hope not," I said, "but I don't think they're going to like it. Even making the film has stirred up a lot of memories already. And bringing back the very German who—"

"This crazy wind must be affecting your mind," Rennie growled, a shade defensively. "Anyway, there's nothing I can do about it now. He's coming on tonight's boat, and I couldn't stop him if I wanted to."

The news spread fast. Rennie Rolfe awed people, so they checked with me instead, to find out whether the rumor was true. I spent the better part of the afternoon assuring people that it was only too true.

In my own mind I couldn't defend Rennie on this, but it seemed disloyal to say so. Wind or no wind, I had to get away from all this talk. So I walked down to the village. It didn't work. Maybe postmistresses are gabby the world over, or maybe this one always talked to me because I speak French. Anyway, she called out to ask if it was true that . . .

"Oui, madame!" I snapped irritably. "But don't worry, there's—"

"Worry!" she snorted. "But why, *monsieur?* After all, he was not so bad, no matter what you hear. He was very correct towards us. He was only doing his duty. *C'était la guerre!"*

Women never fail to amaze me. I suddenly realized the telegram had come through her office and that certainly everybody in the village had heard the news . . .

Normally the little steamer from the mainland gets in at 6 P.M., but this day the mistral delayed its arrival. The hotel lounge was crowded. The coming German seemed to tower over everything like a thundercloud. Everybody watched the clock and the door, their nerves like fiddle strings, anxious and waiting. But Odette and her husband and dour old Pierre were absent.

It was almost a relief when, suddenly, the front door opened and he came in.

I don't know what I'd expected —maybe a German Siegfried ten feet tall or something. But the man who stood there, glancing around nervously, disappointed me. Late forties, medium height, thinning sandy hair, pale blue eyes. He carried a battered little suitcase and wore a cheap-looking suit. He looked dazed and uncertain. I suddenly decided he was as nervous as everyone else.

Nobody stirred. It was like a photograph.

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Then Colonel Evans stood up. He must have known every eye was on him, but he didn't show it. He walked slowly, calmly over to the German. "Good evening, Major," Evans said quietly, holding out his hand.

The tension relaxed like air sighing out of a punctured balloon. The German seemed to stand taller, straighter; probably nobody had called him "Major" for years. Startled, he shook Evans's hand automatically.

"Why—good evening, sir!" He stared at Evans, obviously wondering who he was, but grateful for the gesture.

The colonel smiled. "I don't suppose you recognize me. Civilian clothes change things. So do ten years. But we met here ten years ago . . . in somewhat different circumstances."

Then recognition dawned in the German's face. He seemed to draw back, a sudden wary look in his eyes. "But of course!" he said, faltering. "You were the American captain—"

"Since then," Evans said easily, "I've become a lieutenant-colonel."

So help me, ever so slightly Hetzen clicked his heels and bowed. "My congratulations, Colonel!" he said stiffly.

Although the colonel's gesture cracked the ice a little, it was still no Halloween party. Conversation was polite but sticky. Rennie tried to bubble: "I'm delighted your English is so good, Major. I was afraid we'd have to translate the script into German for you."

Hetzen smiled formally. "No, that will not be necessary. As a British prisoner for two years I had plenty of time to learn English. I must thank that for my present work, in the travel office."

"That's fine," Rennie said. "Tony, here, will give you a script and perhaps you can look it over tonight."

Sensing the strain, Hetzen suddenly stood up. "If you will excuse me," he said, "it has been a long trip. Perhaps it is best if I have dinner and go to bed."

The tension eased when a boy led Hetzen to the dining room.

Rennie turned to me. "It won't be so bad," he said. "The first day or two may be a little awkward, but after that . . ."

"I hope so," I said, "but don't forget Odette didn't even show her face tonight. Neither did her husband. Even Pierre walked out, rather than serve this guy."

Doggedly, Rennie said, "If Evans can do what he did, I don't see why they can't let bygones be bygones, too."

"It was a nice gesture," I admitted, "but Evans is a soldier, and he's got a professional's attitude about war. Don't forget the French lost men, too. And women. And a lot of other things. Among them, their country."

It seemed a pretty good exit line.

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I went to my room for a copy of the script. When I got back, Hetzen was alone in the dining room.

"Thank you," he said stiffly, when I handed him the script. "I am sure it will be very interesting."

He looked lonesome and somehow almost pathetic, but I didn't feel like holding his hand. I went to the lounge.

Sablier Island isn't Broadway, and we usually went to bed early. Around ten the lounge was nearly deserted, and I went upstairs to my room. I began undressing slowly, staring out my window overlooking the beach. I saw two figures strolling, and even in the moonless night I made out the long, platinum hair that could be only Ninon Narbonne, our little French actress. The other, of course, had to be our hero, David Douglas.

I fetched a long sigh. She was something special, slim and appealing, with that special French brand of glamor. I had tried to convince her I was a good ten years younger than my passport said, and that, with my good French, I'd be the perfect companion. But it hadn't worked. When David Douglas arrived she flew to him like an arrow. After that they parted only to brush their teeth. We began calling them Romeo and Juliet.

I sighed some more and tried to sleep. With the mistral howling it wasn't easy. Shutters rattled, doors banged, and the hotel seemed full of strange sounds.

I lay awake thinking of the German major alone in his room, and of what other people were thinking about him. I thought of the dark cave down the beach where the American Rangers had been killed. Suddenly I remembered that the dead sergeant's body had been lying almost exactly where Romeo and Juliet were strolling now. It had some kind of moral, but I couldn't put my finger on it. Young lovers walking hand in hand on the beach, thinking not a moment about death or revenge or hatred. Not at all.

I felt envious, and sad, and very old.

A knock dragged me awake. Groggily I saw it was morning, with bright sunshine, and that the mistral had stopped.

"Entrez!" I croaked.

It was Odette, looking nervous, drawn. *"Monsieur Tony!"* she said hoarsely. "The German major . . . he is not in his room . . . the maid . . ."

"Listen, Odette!" I began sleepily. "I'm sick of the major. Maybe he is an early bird looking for a worm. Maybe he is renewing old acquaintances. Maybe he has gone back to Hamburg—and a fine thing . . ."

"Please!" she said urgently, and I saw she was near tears. "His bed! He did not sleep in it last night!"

I sat up straight, no longer sleepy.

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"I'll get dressed," I said. "Maybe you'd better tell the others.

Hetzen wasn't in the hotel and nobody reported having seen him go out.

Rennie Rolfe looked shaken. "Of all the idiotic things!" he muttered.

I stood on the terrace, looking out over the island, wondering how many days it would take to search it thoroughly. It wasn't so big, but it was covered with thick brush and wild, tumbled rocks, with goat trails leading everywhere.

"The cave!" I said, half aloud.

Odette, close beside me, glanced up swiftly. "Why do you say that?"

I didn't know, myself. For months I had been full of the script, and the cave had somehow come to be a symbol to me of anything mysterious or dangerous or hidden.

"Forget it!" I said. "I've been thinking about it too much."

She stared at me. "But no," she said slowly. "It is an intuition. Come!"

The cave was about a fifteen-minute walk along the beach. Odette, Rennie, and I walked silently with foreboding. I'd been to the cave often, planning our shots with Rennie, but now it seemed unusually sinister.

The cave was deep and funnel-shaped, with the big end facing the sea. Usually the sand floor is just above sea level, but today the wind-raised water had come in slightly. It was ankle-deep, and warm, and went back a few feet into the cave. Coming in from the outer brightness, I couldn't see well. Odette's eyes got used to the dimness first. *"Ah, non! Non!"* she moaned.

I had thought it was a rock. But Konrad Hetzen lay sprawled on his back against the rocks, with his feet dangling in the water.

Rennie Rolfe stared in horror. I did not think he would ever mention "realism" again.

We sat like gloomy mourners on the hotel terrace, waiting for the mainland police to arrive. The only local law was two flustered old constables who apparently hadn't ever handled anything more criminal than illegal dynamiting of fish. One of them was standing guard over Hetzen's body, still untouched.

The second constable rode herd on us, officiously taking down all the useless details that continental police love—passport number, where issued, home address, name of father and mother, where they were born . . . It took time; it looked official, and that was all that counted.

Then the constable hit on the fascinating idea of fingerprints. He made everybody press his fingers on an ink pad. We dirtied a lot of towels cleaning off the mess.

Pierre brought my coffee to the terrace. He was trying to look as depressed as the rest of us, but he was no actor. Underneath, he was almost buoyant.

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"You don't act as if this bothers you," I said irritably.

He darted a quick glance at me. "It is not easy, *monsieur,*" he said with dignity, "for a Frenchman to grieve too much for a dead German officer. Especially this one."

Rennie Rolfe was feeling conscience pangs. "Look, Tony," he said contritely. "Help me write a telegram to his wife."

"So he had a wife?"

He nodded soberly. "And a son, too, I think. Let her know, somehow, without making it too—you know—that we'll pay all expenses, ship his body back, and that she'll get the money he would have drawn. Wait—maybe we ought to make it more."

It jarred on me; I couldn't quite keep my feelings from showing.

"Don't rub it in, Tony," Rennie begged. "I was wrong. I admit it. But who would guess—?" He fell silent.

"There couldn't have been many people out last night—not in that wind," I said. Involuntarily, I looked at David Douglas.

He flushed slightly and took Ninon's hand. "We were," David said defensively.

"I know," I said. "I expect the cops will want to hear all about it."

Somebody else spoke up. It was Solly Geldbaum, peering through his thick-lensed glasses like a sad owl. Solly was a plump little Austrian refugee who was writing the musical score for the picture.

"I was out, too," he said, blinking. "To listen to the wind. For the music. A kind of tone poem. I shall call it simply *Mistral*. Strange, wild music. I wanted to hear the sound the wind makes howling around the rocks, whistling through the bushes, with the thunder of the waves smashing on the shore."

"Where'd you walk?" I asked.

He pointed vaguely toward the high point, which is a cliff overhanging the cave. "Up there," he said. "To the end."

"Did you see or hear anything?" I asked.

Solly smiled. "With these eyes, see?" I had forgotten he was so shortsighted he could hardly see his plate on the table. "And hearing? No, only the wind and the sea."

Rennie grinned sardonically at me. "Trying to play detective, Tony? Well, you've done pretty well so far. You guessed what might happen, and you were right. You guessed he might be in the cave, and you were right. How about guessing again? Who did it?"

I grinned back at him. "I don't know," I said, "and right now I don't even want to think about it. That's for the cops and they can get along fine without me." I started across the terrace. "Right now, I'm going swimming and try to forget the whole thing."

And I did. At least, I went swimming.

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But I was wrong about not working with the police. An Inspector and two assistants arrived by special boat a short time after lunch and within ten minutes they sent for me. Not, I'm sorry to say, for my keen brain, but only because I speak pretty fair French and, with all the Americans, they needed an interpreter.

"Also, *monsieur,* there is another thing," the Inspector told me. He was a thin, wiry, brisk man named Bayard. "I understand this may have something to do with an incident which happened ten years ago, and that, in this matter, you are the expert, yes?"

I admitted that after nearly six months' study I could almost recite the files word for word.

"Bon!" nodded Bayard. He leaned back in his chair, smiling slightly. "I read many detective stories, *monsieur,* for my amusement. I know the professional is always contemptuous of the amateur, always refuses his help, and in the end, the amateur is always right."

I decided I was going to like him. *"Monsieur l'Inspecteur,"* I said, "I have a terrible confession to make. I have even written detective stories like that, but, secretly, my heart was always with the professionals. They get a raw deal in the books."

He laughed and stood up. "Agreed. And now let's go see the body of this unfortunate German. And on the way perhaps you can tell me the story of your film."

I whittled it down to fit a fifteen-minute walk. The sixteen Rangers had landed from a submarine in rubber boats, reaching the cave exactly on schedule at 10 P.M. They had a tiny radio transmitter to send back a signal if they knocked out the radar station. But if no signal arrived by 11 o'clock—only one hour later—our bombers on Corsica would take over. For, by that time, the Allied invasion fleet would be getting near radar range and, alarm or no alarm, that station had to be smashed.

Odette had arranged for a local French guide to meet them at the cave. But nothing went right. The Rangers were surprised halfway to the radar station. Bells and sirens went off, searchlights flashed on, and the Germans opened up with burp guns. Four Americans were killed instantly, but in the darkness and confusion ten of them, plus the French guide, got back to the cave unfollowed. It was the agreed rendezvous point, a good shelter if the bombers had to come.

But two were captured: Captain Evans and Sergeant Ellsberg. The Germans were excited and mad, and the German major, Hetzen, turned Evans and Ellsberg over to a real SS-type lieutenant for "interrogation."

This goon started with the captain first, and let the sergeant watch. The beginning was gentle: he merely burned Evans's feet a little. That didn't work, and things

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got tougher—things that, for all his "realism," Rennie Rolfe could never put on any screen. Evans went out of his head with pain, but kept mumbling only his name, rank, and serial number—as the Geneva Convention allows. Finally they slammed him on the floor, still moaning, and turned to the sergeant.

Ellsberg couldn't take it. He'd almost fainted just watching what they did to his captain, and he started talking even before the flames actually touched his feet. The captain, half alive, heard the sergeant talking and, worst of all, telling where the others were hiding.

At that news the Germans went into action. They threw Ellsberg into one locked room, Evans into another, and went gunning for the holed-up Rangers. They surrounded the cave and demanded surrender. For an answer, the Rangers fired a few rounds. The Germans lobbed in hand grenades. In the small cave it was like a meat chopper: every man there was blown to bits.

Meanwhile, things were happening back at the Roquin hotel, the German command post. In all the uproar, with most of the Germans at the cave, Odette took a long chance. With a passkey she opened the two rooms where Ellsberg and Evans were locked up, handed them each a pistol, and ran. So did they, out into the darkness.

By luck Odette let the captain out first and he needed the little head-start. With his burned feet, Evans couldn't move fast, and now he was more afraid of his own sergeant than of the Germans. Ellsberg knew that Captain Evans had heard him spilling everything, and now would probably try to kill Evans to keep his mouth shut.

But the night was black; the head-start helped and Evans managed to hobble away to a hiding place under a rock ledge—safe from the American bombers he knew would be coming soon, since no message was sent. He passed out and did not even hear the bombs that smashed the hotel and the radar station.

In the morning, according to plan, a little British task force took over Sablier Island with no trouble. The Germans, knowing they were cut off from the mainland without any chance of help, surrendered promptly.

Evans, with his burned feet, dragged himself up to the British and told what had happened. A party went hunting for the traitorous sergeant and found his blasted body on the beach near the hotel. By a kind of savage justice he had been hit by an American bomb.

That was the story . . .

Inspector Bayard had listened intently. Now he said, smiling, "Only one thing is lacking. The American captain should have married the beautiful French girl who

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saved his life and lived happily forever after."

"I know," I said ruefully; "it sounds like that kind of story. But it's actually what happened. It's almost word for word out of the files."

He turned serious. "My friend, compared with many things that happened in France in those days, your story—if you'll forgive me—is almost dull."

I knew what he meant.

"Of course," he said thoughtfully, "there are some gaps in the story."

"Gaps?" I must have sounded injured. I thought I knew everything about the case, down to the brand of tooth paste each Ranger had used.

"For one thing," he asked, "who was the French guide who was also killed?"

I felt like a fool. It hadn't even occurred to me to ask. "All I know," I fumbled, "was that he was a local boy."

Bayard waved a careless hand. "Never mind. In such a small place everyone will know. But there is another thing—you say the Germans might have been warned the Rangers were coming?"

"There's the barest chance," I said, doubtfully, "but I don't think so. The Germans were on edge anyway, expecting something big to happen. I think they were just on the ball."

I was trying to explain what "on the ball" meant when we reached the cave. The local constable greeted Bayard with great deference and said fiercely that nobody had touched the body or been in the cave since the crime was discovered. Bayard nodded absently. He studied the body carefully, then wandered around the cave.

At the back were some large, rugged rocks as big as pianos, edged by small, dark pebbles carried there by some forgotten storm. The Inspector crouched behind first one rock, then another, aiming with an imaginary gun.

"Whoever did this," Bayard finally said, "was an expert. I must give him credit. He has picked the finest place for murder I have seen in twenty years of investigation. Consider!" He went on, almost with admiration, "First, inside this cave, the shot would probably not be heard—especially with that cursed mistral blowing. Second, the murderer could hide behind these rocks until his victim was near enough. Third, the victim comes from outside; he cannot see well; he perhaps has a light or, at any rate, is outlined against the starry sky. Fourth, with the sea water in the cave, there are no footprints. Perfect!"

"But why did he ever come here?" I puzzled. I was remembering the German's scarcely controlled jitters.

"Perhaps someone invited him," the Inspector said.

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"What time was there for inviting?" I argued. "He only arrived a few hours before—"

Very pointedly Bayard said. "There was, however, time for somebody. And, remember, he did not have to make enemies in a single night. He made them ten years ago." He shook his head. "It was a foolish thing to do, to bring him back. You Americans do not understand."

I couldn't argue; I agreed with him.

"And," Bayard added, "he was a bigger fool to come."

Now at last he told his men to pull Hetzen's body entirely clear of the water. One of them seemed to have had medical training. After examining the wound he said it had happened around midnight.

"And I think, *monsieur l'Inspecteur,*" he added, "that the gun was an American .45."

Bayard nodded. "Nothing else makes such a shocking wound. A terrible weapon." Suddenly he turned to me. "Unless I am wrong, you Americans parachuted many of these guns to our resistance people during the war, yes?"

I hated to disappoint him. "Yes," I said, "but don't get your hopes up." Then I explained that we had .45's running out of our ears, lent by the Army for the film.

"So?" he said thoughtfully.

They began searching the pockets of Hetzen's suit. There was a cheap, sodden wallet with some French and German money, a return ticket to Hamburg, and snapshots of a tired woman in her forties and a tow-headed boy about seven. I stared at the pictures, thinking gloomily what "realism" had done. Then I heard a sharply drawn breath.

"We spoke," Bayard said softly, "of an invitation."

He held out a soggy piece of blue paper, with a message written in French in penciled capital letters: *MEET ME TONIGHT AT THE CAVE. MIDNIGHT. SOMETHING URGENT.*

It was signed with an "O."

Reluctantly I nodded. Nervous as he was, Hetzen probably would have had no fear of meeting Odette. But what was the "something urgent" he had seemed to understand at once? And why the cave?

But that was clear. He would understand she could not come to him in her husband's own hotel, with a hundred eyes watching.

I glanced at Bayard—to find him shaking his head slowly; he was half smiling.

"No," he said. "It is almost inconceivable that Madame Roquin wrote this herself. When one writes with capital letters it is to conceal the true handwriting. And would she be foolish enough to leave this dangerous note on his body? No, someone wrote this only to cast suspicion on her, to lure the German here.

"He could fire so that the bullet

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would pass out into the sea and be lost forever," Bayard went on. 'Even if it struck the wall of the cave it would be so damaged it would tell us little or nothing. However . . ."

The inspector did not plan to overlook even the slimmest chance.

Back at the hotel, Bayard asked for Odette, but a wide-eyed maid said she was in the village shopping.

"At this time of day?" Bayard demanded, eyebrows raised. Any French housewife worth her salt does marketing in the morning, the earlier the better. But this, of course, had been a special morning.

The maid was itching to gossip. "It is said, *monsieur,* that the undertaker will not handle the body of the German, and Madame has perhaps gone—to arrange this."

If it were true, I admired her courage. It could be no fun to brave all the new talk this would cause. But I liked her sense of fitness about this last gesture for a man she had betrayed.

At the reception desk Auguste Roquin pretended to be very busy with some papers when Bayard asked for the key to Hetzen's room.

The hotelkeeper looked over the board of hooks where the keys were hung.

"It is not here," he said gruffly, "but I will let you in." He went up with us and opened the door with a passkey.

The room offered very little. Hetzen had not had time to give it any of his own personality—if he had any to give. He had unpacked his suitcase, laying away his clothes with the precision you would expect of a German officer. Although he had not slept in his bed, he had certainly lain on it, for there was a slightly rumpled depression. On the bedside table was the film script I had given him last night, and I guessed he had stretched out on the bed, reading it.

"Strange!" Bayard was puzzling. "The key. It is not here, nor on the hook downstairs, nor in the door itself, nor on the body. Where else would a key be? And if somebody stole it, or took it from his body, why?"

He had a maid relock the room as we left and ordered her to let no one in but the police. Then we went to see Johnny Shaw, our properties man. Bayard frowned when he saw our prop room was just an ordinary hotel room with an ordinary lock and ordinary key.

"Is that all?" he queried. "With so many guns here?"

Johnny started to bristle. "Nothing's ever been lost. I keep the key myself, night and day."

The Inspector brushed this aside. "Probably half the keys in the hotel fit this door and every maid has a passkey. You should be more careful. Guns are valuable—and dangerous."

The room looked pretty deadly. There was an open wooden box

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full of the '45's, a lot of hand grenades, some anti-personnel mines, and the like. Johnny said there should be twenty of the .45's and started to reach in and count them.

Bayard restrained him. 'Wait!" he said. "Let my men test them, perhaps for fingerprints, perhaps for signs they have been fired. Although, of course, a clever man could clean both away."

He asked about the cartridges for the pistols. Johnny said most of it was blank ammunition, but admitted there were a few real ones for special effects. In movie talk, that made sense, but the phrase struck Bayard.

"Special effects!" he echoed sardonically. "Yes, the effects were quite special!" He asked how many live cartridges there were, but Johnny Shaw, embarrassed, said he didn't know exactly; they were loose in a box and he'd never counted them.

Bayard pursed his lips. "Lock the door well," he said, with a glinting smile, "and be sure the key does not leave your pocket."

Bayard led me to the terrace, which was oddly deserted. Only Solly Geldbaum was there, seated at a remote table littered with music sheets. He looked up quickly as we passed, nodded, then went back to penciling in some musical notes. It would take more than a murder to drive music out of Solly's head.

Bayard picked out the table farthest away from Solly and we sat down. He saw his two assistants looking expectantly at us from inside the hotel and beckoned them to join us. He told his men to try both the German's room and the properties room for fingerprints, to check the .45's very carefully, to talk to all the hotel servants.

The Inspector leaned back when they left, relaxing. Twilight was not far away, and to the north, purple and remote, the coast of France was already fading.

"Now tell me," Bayard said, "exactly what you remember of yesterday evening. How people reacted when they found the German was coming."

He kept his eyes closed while I did my best, and when I finished he was silent for a while. Then he spoke: "So neither Monsieur nor Madame Roquin was there when he arrived?"

"No," I said, "but it was just before dinner and sometimes they're in the kitchen, making sure the food is—worthy of France."

He chuckled. "And the old man had left? At least this we can determine now."

He summoned Pierre. "So you left your post last night when the German came," Bayard said. "Where did you go?"

"Home!" the old man said curtly, with a wary look in his eyes.

"Can this be proved?"

Pierre glared. "Here proof is not needed. People accept my word."

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But under more questions he agreed he had seen no one on his walk to the little shack near the sea where he lived alone.

Bayard probed further. "But why did you walk out, telling no one?"

The old eyes blazed. "I am surprised a Frenchman must ask such a question!"

Bayard took no offense. "Come now, my friend," he said reasonably, "the war is long finished. Many Germans come now to France as tourists, some to this island, some to this very hotel. And you have served them, no?"

"Yes," he admitted grudgingly.

"Then why was this one different?"

Pierre's face was stiff, closed. "If, *monsieur,* you had lived on this island, you would know why this one was different!" He turned away. For a moment I thought the Inspector would order him back, but he seemed oddly sympathetic with the old man's anger.

"Ah!" he mused, half smiling. "There is fire in these old ones! More than in most of the young these days."

The still-warm late afternoon sun had a strange languorous effect on me. I looked around wonderingly at the little island. In the golden sunlight it looked gay and lovely and innocent. It was hard to believe it had seen so much violence.

I saw a figure moving slowly along the short-cut path from the village.

"Madame Roquin is coming back," I said softly.

She saw us and would have walked on into the hotel without stopping had not Bayard asked her politely to join us. All her usual bounce and gaiety had vanished; she seemed pale, faded, older.

After a few meaningless opening phrases Bayard got to the heart of the matter. "There is one thing," he said hesitantly, "where you may help us, *madame.* About a note written last night."

Odette started and for a split second something like fear flashed across her eyes. "A note, *monsieur?*" she echoed.

Bayard gave her the sodden blue note we had found on the German's body and watched intently as she read it with staring eyes.

"But this is madness!" she cried, strangled. "I—I did not write this!"

"Frankly, *madame,*" he said, "I never thought you did. But you knew of it, yes? For when I said 'note' you seemed to know what I meant." He waited.

Odette bit her lip, glancing at both of us. "Last night," she said, "I too received a note like this! The same kind of paper—which is our hotel stationery. Also in pencil, also in capital letters."

"May I see it?" the Inspector asked casually.

"I—I burned it," she replied, looking down. "It seemed . . . best."

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Bayard was impatient. "Then what did it say?"

"Like this," she faltered, "not exactly the same words, but the same meaning. Except that it said eleven thirty, not midnight and it was not signed."

He studied her a moment. "You were wise, *madame,* not to go."

"But, *monsieur,*" she gasped, *"I did go!"*

Both of us stared at her. At last Bayard said severely, "Why did you not say so earlier?"

"I know," she said, eyes bright with tears. "I was so—I did not think well. I was afraid one would suspect . . ."

The Inspector's jaw tightened as he began to question her. She had reached the cave, as instructed, exactly at 11:30. She had seen no one there; she had called inside once or twice. Then she had returned to the hotel.

Bayard looked doubtful. "This can mean only one thing: that, although the note was not signed, you knew perfectly well who wrote it."

"No, *monsieur,*" she said in a low, controlled voice.

"I hope," he said sardonically, "that my own wife will not be thus affected by a note from any unknown. Were you not frightened?

"Of what?" she asked.

"Come now!" Bayard was growing impatient. "Surely you thought the note was from the German. Who else?"

She smiled sadly. "I had nothing to fear from Konrad."

"Surely," Bayard said, pursing his lips, "the major would not be happy that you had betrayed his secrets to the Allies!"

She flushed at the blunt language. "He never knew, *monsieur!* You forget, he was put immediately on the British prison ship. There was never time for him to find out." Her voice fell to a soft whisper. "And now, I am glad it was so."

Then I remembered something. "He knew about it last night, though," I pointed out. "He had read the script for the film."

She gazed at me unhappily. "Ah! So he knew, after all!"

Bayard was impatient. "Another thing. Why did you not wait at least a few minutes at the cave for this mysterious person to arrive? Why leave so quickly?"

Her eyes were fixed on the table. "I—I was frightened."

"Ah! But a moment ago you denied you were frightened!" he pressed.

She looked harassed. "I—when I got there, it was different. The wind . . . the darkness . . . the black cave . . . suddenly it seemed a bad place."

"And you saw no one else?" Bayard asked.

"No one!" she said. "Yes—the young ones. The young American actor, the young French actress. They were walking along the beach, also toward the cave."

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Bayard glanced at me and I felt guilty. In all the excitment I hadn't thought to tell him about Romeo and Juliet. I did now.

He was half smiling when I finished. "I see. I imagine they never knew the mistral was blowing. At any rate"—he turned to Odette—"they can vouch for you."

She shook her head slowly. "I do not think they saw me. They were on the beach and I was on a path on the hillside. I—I did not want to be seen. It was very dark. And I think they can see nothing but each other."

Despite more probing questions she said nothing new. Bayard finally let her go and watched her with narrowed eyes as she left. He turned to me, with an impatient grimace, and was about to say something, when one of his assistants came hurrying out. He held a set of fingerprints. He showed them to Bayard and talked in an excited, low undertone that excluded me.

"Why did these old fools not say so before!" Bayard barked, so that Solly Geldbaum looked up in wonder from his music. "Well, send him here!"

The assistant came back—with Pierre. He looked sullen, defiant.

"Listen to me, old man!" Bayard said sharply. "Is this true what they tell me? That the young Frenchman killed in the cave with the Americans—he was your son?"

I could hardly believe it. Yet I saw Pierre lift his head, a fierce, proud glow in his eyes. "It is true, *monsieur!* My only son. He was a brave man and he died like a brave man. For his country!"

"But, Pierre!" I said. "Why didn't you tell me? After all these weeks!"

"It is not a matter, *monsieur,*" he said with dignity, "to talk of lightly."

Bayard watched him with a curious mixture of pity and accusation. Then he said in an oddly gentle voice, "Come, old man, tell us."

"Tell?" Pierre echoed. "There is nothing to tell . . . Ah, yes, I know. The murder. All the village thinks the same—and they think I did right. And can I be sorry he is dead? But I did not do it."

Impatiently Bayard held up the fingerprints. "These are your prints—found in the room with the guns!"

Pierre glared at the prints as if they had been serpents. Then he shrugged. "And why not? I helped carry all those boxes and crates up to the room when they arrived weeks ago."

Bayard snorted. "Nonsense! These are new prints, a day or two, not more. Come, tell me!"

But Pierre clung doggedly to the same story. The prints were old ones. He had gone straight home, alone, to his shack. He had not been to the cave.

"Do you think I would take such troubles to kill a Boche?" he

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demanded. "Ah, no, *monsieur;* I would use these!" He held up his gnarled, powerful fisherman's hands.

Finally, unable to crack his story, Bayard let him go temporarily. Without arresting him.

"The island is its own prison," the Inspector said, almost defensively.

It was none of my business, but if anybody could leave the island it would be a fisherman with a boat. Fleetingly, I wondered whether Bayard was giving the old man a chance, but decide no policeman could risk that. Bayard was saying unprintable things about what he was going to do to the local constables who had failed to tell him at once about Pierre and his son.

"It is always this way when people are posted in a small place too long," he said in disgust. "They forget they represent the law. They try only to protect their neighbors."

The second assistant came out to join Bayard and his man, and again they talked rapidly in low tones. Something seemed to have happened, but, although Bayard glanced at me once, he seemed in no hurry to let me in on it. I had to remind myself—I was only an interpreter, not an investigator.

The lounge inside was filling with people, for it was not long until dinner. I saw Rennie Rolfe making covert motions to me and I went over. He asked me what had been happening. I got a little pleasure out of giving him a tight-lipped "Oh, nothing much," with a very strong hint that I knew more than I was telling.

He didn't prod me. He had something else on his mind.

"Look, Tony," he said. "I know this investigation has to go on, but —well, you know we've got to get moving. Three days lost with that awful wind, and now today, the first good day, this thing comes up."

"Yes," I said, "I think the whole thing was just a plot to delay you."

"Don't be nasty, Tony!" he said placatively. "You know what I mean. But I was wondering if you could ask the Inspector if we could go to work tomorrow. Of course, everybody will be on tap if he wants to talk to them. But tell him we're losing ten thousand dollars a day. Put it in francs, so he'll understand."

"Okay," I said shortly. "But not now. He's busy."

At that moment the dinner gong rang. Bayard and his men started for the door. It would take more than a dead man—especially a dead German—to keep a Frenchman from the dinner table.

The three detectives sat in a corner by themselves, talking in low voices, consulting notebooks. From time to time, they glanced around the room from person to person. It didn't help anybody's appetite. It pointed up the unpleasant fact that

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perhaps somebody in this very room was a killer.

Bayard was being a lot more leisurely than the cops in the stories I'd read—and written. So far, he hadn't talked to a single American other than myself. Surely he planned to. He seemed to be collecting a lot of little things like fingerprints and gossip first.

Maybe the routine work would pay off, after all. I realized that, in a normal French case, his assistants would do a lot of the interviewing. But here, speaking no English, they couldn't talk to the Americans without my help and I'd been tied up with the Inspector.

Finally I went over to Bayard's table to ask if Rennie could start shooting the next day. Nobody has a greater reverence for money than a Frenchman. Bayard nearly choked on his fish when I explained that the delay was costing us about 3,500,000 francs each day —probably his salary for several years.

"Mon Dieu!" he gasped. Finally he got control of himself and said yes, we could start work in the morning—but with the understanding he could talk to anyone at any time, film or no film.

"And by the way," he added, with a flickering glance at his assistants, "I am not quite finished for tonight. After dinner, if you are free to interpret . . ."

"Of course," I said, and went back to my own table, puzzled. Interpreting meant an American, no doubt—and why not? He would naturally want to talk with Rennie, Colonel Evans, Solly—even Romeo.

There was a stir at the door and I saw the two local constables. Bayard called them over and gave them a real chewing-out for withholding the information about Pierre's son. They shifted uneasily as Bayard tongue-lashed them and their necks turned lobster-red.

I smiled, and suddenly stopped. I'd been a little forgetful, myself. I hadn't told him about Solly Geldbaum's nocturnal stroll the night Hetzen was murdered. I made up for it after dinner.

"A coincidence," he murmured, looking at me curiously. "I was just going to call him."

The little musician settled down in his chair before us, in a private room. He was a composed-looking composer. His magnified eyes behind the thick spectacles seemed almost sleepy.

Quickly we went over the same ground he had told me about this morning: that he had gone to the cliff, at whose bottom was the cave, but that he had seen nothing and heard nothing. He was frustratingly vague about time, and Bayard looked blankly at me as I tried to translate Solly's dreamy, artistic notions about the "mistral" music. But the French have an innate respect for all artists, and Ba-

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yard didn't seem to find this so strange.

The Inspector was toying with a paper in his hands. I recognized it as the sheet that the constable had used to take down our passport details this morning.

"I see," Bayard said at last, "that you were born in Vienna. When did you go to America?"

Solly's dreamy eyes turned toward him. I thought they glinted with a new light. "The spring of 1938," he said.

"Just in time," Bayard mused. "Just before Hitler came. And your family?"

The light burned brighter in Solly's eyes. "No," he said softly. "They remained in Austria too—long."

Within ten minutes Bayard knew more about Solly Geldbaum than we in Hollywood had learned in that many years. True, he seemed to have no close friends, rarely talked to anybody, seemed buried in music; but you'd think that *somebody* would have found out about his family.

It was brief and tragic: after the *Anschluss* they were trapped in Austria by the Nazis. Near the end of the war they vanished into Hitler's monstrous gas chambers. His father, mother, two sisters.

Bayard looked at him in compassion. Then he said gently, "I cannot blame you for hating the Nazis."

Solly returned his gaze. "I understand what you think," he said gravely, "but it is not so. I did not kill this German. I do not believe in killing. Even in the war I was a conscientious objector."

I had some trouble translating that for Bayard. The French don't believe in conscientious objectors. They conscript anybody, including priests, to fight, if necessary.

"That is," Solly went on softly, "I was in the medical corps, in the Pacific. An aidman, you know, Tony? There is no killing." He hesitated, then added shyly, "I got a Purple Heart."

And nobody had known about that, either.

Bayard fiddled with his pencil and, at last, said abruptly that Solly could go. He watched his retreating back and said, with wondering pity, "And he doesn't believe in killing!"

He roused himself. "Next, I suppose, the young couple."

Romeo and Juliet came in nervously. But, despite the depression of Solly's story, there was something about a pair of starry-eyed lovers that cleared the air, especially for a Frenchman. He seemed tolerant of their vagueness about time and places. I could vouch for the fact they'd started about ten. But after that they seemed to have wandered in a world where time simply didn't exist. They'd apparently walked, then stopped walking, then talked and smoked, and walked some more.

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"Surely more than this?" Bayard grinned. "And the mistral? You did not notice the wind—that kept almost everyone else indoors?"

Ninon shot a quick, embarrassed look at Douglas. To my surprise he reddened and nodded, as if in assent.

Ninon said, "The fact is, *monsieur l'Inspecteur,* the wind was so strong that, to get away from it, we went into the cave!"

"What!" Bayard barked, his good humor gone. "Does no one tell me anything?"

Ninon flushed. "No one has asked. Also, perhaps they would think—" she gestured helplessly.

"When were you there?" Bayard demanded.

Tears filled her eyes. "But that is the trouble! We do not know! It is horrible! Perhaps we were there —just before. Perhaps, if we had not left so soon it would not have happened." Her eyes widened in horror. *"Mon Dieu!"* she gasped. "Perhaps already his body was there, in the dark, where we could not see." She turned stricken eyes to Douglas.

Controlling himself, Bayard tried to get more exact details. It was not easy. According to Douglas they had been in the cave—only just inside the mouth, not far back —long enough to smoke one or two cigarettes.

"But caves are not nice," Ninon said, looking very feminine. "You know? Things drip and drop from the top. It is—ugh! So we left. Even the wind was better. At last—I do not know just when—we go home."

Had they seen Odette? No, nothing and nobody. As best we could figure, with all their wandering and waiting and talking, it could easily have taken them two hours, which would have permitted them to be at the cave around midnight. Maybe.

Bayard shook his head in frustration after they left. "Tomorrow I shall have a shot fired inside the cave and see how well it can be heard outside, and at what distance. Although, with the mistral howling— By the way," he remarked, "this young American looks amazingly like your colonel."

I explained that he had been selected for that very reason.

Bayard nodded, looking at his watch, then said gravely, "I had hoped to discount the young couple. But now—" He hesitated, then said, "We might as well talk to your colonel."

There seemed to be something about the colonel's formal, military composure that tempted Bayard to try shock treatment. Evans had barely settled into the chair when the Inspector said sternly, "Why did you not tell us, Colonel, that you had been in the German's room last night?" He held up some fingerprints. "These were found there!"

Evans flushed. "It was not a

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question of concealing anything, sir!" he said stiffly. "I know nothing of police work. I assumed there would be an orderly investigation of everyone and that my turn would come in due course."

Bayard was not pacified. "But you mentioned this to no one else, which would have been a perfectly normal thing to do."

"If this is an accusation, sir, I resent it," Evans said. "This is a—a very strange case. Under the circumstances, I thought it best to keep my information to myself until I was asked by the proper authorities."

The Inspector seemed to decide this was how the military mind might work. "There is no accusation," he said wearily. "But now, please, tell me what happened."

Evans recited his story as if he were submitting a report. He said he had gone to his room last night and hadn't even had time to undress before the German major knocked at his door.

"He wanted to thank me for—well, for shaking hands with him when he came. I suppose you heard about that? He told me he wouldn't have come back here, except that he needed the money desperately. He'd been having a hard time, and his son was ill."

Evans went on impassively, "Hetzen told me he was sorry my men had been killed in the cave, but he hoped I understood it was a legitimate act of war. He had offered them surrender and they had refused."

Curiously, Bayard asked, "And what did you say?"

For a few moments Evans didn't answer. Finally he said, "I don't know whether you'll understand this, but I agreed with Hetzen. And I meant it. I wouldn't have ten years ago—you do strange things in hot blood. But I guess I've gained a more professional attitude."

Evans paused. "Unless you've been through it yourself, you don't know what it means to lose the men you've trained and led, lived with, and fought with for so long. But in my heart, now, anyway—I can't blame him personally. I'd have done the same thing if some Germans had holed up in a cave and refused to surrender. Maybe this sounds cold-blooded to you?"

"No," Bayard said. "I can understand this. However, Colonel, this talk took place in *your* room, but your fingerprints were found in *his* room."

Evans smiled. "I'm not finished yet." He turned to me. "He'd been reading your script, Tony, and he said some things weren't quite right. He said that for the sake of his honor as an officer he hoped it could be changed."

"What was wrong?" I demanded, so defensively that they both laughed.

"Only a small thing." The colonel chuckled. "The part about the

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torture—you sort of give the impression that the major himself ordered it done. He went to great lengths to convince me it was out of his hands. He said—and there's a lot to it—that every Wehrmacht unit had a tough character, an SS or Gestapo man, assigned to it as 'security officer.' You remember this was only a couple of weeks after that plot to assassinate Hitler. The Nazis were wild and desperate; so they put these fanatics in every outfit. They had absolute authority in 'security' matters. The *Führer's* direct orders."

I thought it over, and nodded. "He could be right. It'll be simple to change. I guess we owe that much to him."

"I agree," Evans said. "He was very insistent. He took me over to his room—it's almost next door—and showed me the exact parts of the script he wished could be changed. Therefore, my fingerprints."

Almost reluctantly, Bayard nodded. Then he suddenly looked up. "Ah, yes, Colonel, about this script. Tell me, did he seem surprised or hurt to learn from it that Madame Roquin had been secretly giving intelligence to the Allies?"

Evans flushed. "Why should he be surprised?" he demanded.

"Because, in all probability," Bayard said, "he never knew it before."

Evans thought it over. "No, he never mentioned it," he said, puzzled. "But what would that have to do with the—case?"

Bayard drummed his fingers on the table. "You see, Colonel," he said hesitantly, "there seems to be some chance that the Germans were warned of your coming attack ten years ago, and"—

"I don't think so," Evans said decisively, shaking his head, "though it may have looked that way. I think they were just good soldiers, alert all the time, because they knew, or suspected, that the big landing was in the wind. Remember, Patton was near Paris by then and a lot of people were expecting us to hit the south coast. I don't think there could have been a leak; we kept absolute security on the raid."

Bayard picked his words carefully. "On your side, yes," he said, "but there were people on this island who knew. Madame Roquin, of course, and the guide she arranged for."

"That's nonsense!" Evans burst out. "She'd never do such a thing. Why, she's got two French medals and an American citation for her underground work. As for the guide—why, he was killed, too!"

"By pure accident," Bayard pointed out smoothly. "He would never dream such a thing would happen. And his father might have known—Pierre; it's the kind of thing a son might confide in a father. And perhaps even Monsieur Roquin himself knew. True, he

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and Madame were not married then, but they were always together at the hotel, perhaps already secretly engaged. She might have let him in on the secret."

Evans stood up, disbelief in his face. "You don't seem to have much confidence in your compatriots, sir."

The Inspector smiled rather sadly. "A policeman," he sighed, "has few illusions, Colonel. And I am afraid there is more than one Frenchman today who wears a resistance medal and does not deserve it. You see, there were some who played both sides. It was dangerous, but if they succeeded, they would be safe no matter which side won."

Coldly, Evans asked if that were all, and left when Bayard nodded.

"He seemed irritated," Bayard said thoughtfully, when the door closed. "Or perhaps it was shock." He yawned. "You Americans are romanticists. You believe people to be all devil, or all angel . . ."

But Americans are not the only romanticists—or the only realists. Someone on the tiny island was all devil—we were to learn who it was before long . . .

(*continued on page 94*)

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EDITORS' FILE CARD

AUTHOR: **MARY HOCKING**

TITLE: ***Brother Ambrose Has Come Home***

TYPE: Suspense Story

LOCALE: England

TIME: The Present

COMMENTS: *Meet Miss Adeline, as curious a character as you have encountered in a long time . . . Personally, we wouldn't want to be brother Ambrose for all the money the pixies themselves ever hid in the dark of the moon . . .*

"IT'S AMBROSE," THE MAN SAID. "Your brother Ambrose."

Miss Adeline Bowles, busy clipping her hedge with a pair of nail scissors, did not look up. The rain, which was falling steadily, depressed the brim of her large straw hat so that only the lower part of her face was visible.

The man leaned forward and repeated loudly, "It's Ambrose. Your brother Ambrose."

The straw hat tilted back and Miss Adeline's vivid blue eyes rested on the man's face. It was always difficult to tell what Miss Adeline was thinking, or whether she was thinking at all; but on this occasion there was a faint distaste in the pucker of her mouth.

"Ambrose?" she said. There followed a long pause, perhaps for recollection, then, "Ambrose went away. He went away fifteen years ago."

The man smiled and lines wreathed his face, making him look rather like a sad monkey.

"That's right. He went to South America. Now he's come back. Ambrose has come home, Adeline."

Miss Adeline, accepting this statement without enthusiasm, said, "In that case, I suppose you had better come in for a moment."

She drifted up the long drive and by the time she had reached the front porch she seemed to have forgotten about the man. She

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opened the door and would have closed it in his face if his footwork had not been particularly deft.

"You have been so used to being alone," he said, with a smile that was meant to be forgiving.

"I am never alone," answered Miss Adeline, picking up one of three tabby cats which were sitting on a bed in the large hall. In addition to the bed, the hall was cluttered up with a dressing table, wardrobe, and two heavy trunks.

"We have had burglars in the neighborhood," Miss Adeline said, threading her way toward the back of the house. "So I'm sleeping in the hall. Then I shall be on hand when they come."

The man's eyes rested on the two trunks. "You are keeping our money safe, I see."

"There is no money," she answered airily, opening the kitchen door. "You had better come in here and dry yourself. Will you be staying long? I could make you some tea, I expect."

There was an ancient rocking chair placed in front of the kitchen range. The man sat down and slowly began to unlace his shoes.

"Oh, yes," he said. "I shall be staying. You see, my dear, I have come home for good."

Miss Adeline was not moved by this announcement; but she took off her large straw hat and laid it on a shelf above the sink, then she darted across the room, straightened a dilapidated wall-rug which hung on one wall, fluffed up her silver curls in a cracked mirror, and took a large silver teapot out of a cupboard.

For a moment it seemed as though Miss Adeline was prepared to play the hostess. But after flurrying round for a few minutes, picking up a saucer here and a sugar bowl there, her interest waned and she sank into a chair in the corner of the room where she played with two kittens.

The man made tea. Miss Adeline talked to the kittens for a while and then dozed. When she woke the man was washing the tea things. She stared at him in a rather surprised way as though she had expected that by this time he would have vanished.

The man's clothing was beginning to dry, but his long, straight hair was still plastered lank about his ears. Miss Adeline tilted her head to one side and looked at the dark hair and the thin, sallow face. Suddenly she jumped up and swept out of the room.

She went into the library which was being spring-cleaned. All the books were on the floor and the shelves were empty. It took Miss Adeline quite a time to clamber across to a table by the window. There was a photograph in a silver frame on the table, a photograph of a dark-haired man the lower part of whose face was almost entirely obscured by a long, drooping mustache.

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Miss Adeline stared at the photograph with an expression which was very nearly thoughtful.

After a while she strayed from the library into the lounge. The lounge was tidy because there were only two pieces of furniture in it—a piano and a settee. Miss Adeline sat on the piano. She stared in front of her for a long time while outside the windows the light gradually faded. The door of the lounge was half open and part of the hall was visible.

Presently the man came out and lit the gas lamp, then he went to the bottom of the stairs and called "Adeline" once or twice. When he received no reply he moved away, and after a moment Miss Adeline heard something being dragged along the floor.

She went to the door and peered out. The man had his back to her; he was kneeling under the gas lamp, raising the lid of one of the trunks. The man searched for a long time, while Miss Adeline stood in the shadow of the lounge door watching him.

When he turned to the second trunk, she became bored and went across to the French windows which she unfastened quietly. There was a smell of damp earth and rotting vegetation. Miss Adeline gathered up her long skirts and plunged into the darkness.

Half an hour later, when the man had returned to the kitchen, she came through the back door carrying a rake and muttering angrily, "I planted some strawberries the other week, but I can't find them anywhere. I'm sure someone comes and digs them up. I told the man who moved the furniture for me, and he quite agreed. But when I reported it to the police they were most unhelpful."

The man's eyes gleamed and the odd monkey-face twisted into an ingratiating smile. "I'll look for you." And despite the darkness he insisted on going into the garden there and then, armed with the rake.

The garden was a wilderness, but in one or two places the earth had been recently disturbed. The man knelt down.

"I planted some vegetables, too," Miss Adeline said, suddenly hovering above him. "But they never seem to come up, either. The police are very negligent about these matters, you know. And I remind them at least twice a week."

The man said quietly, "But you have me to look after you now, Adeline."

After a few days Miss Adeline became rather tired of having someone to look after her and when her solicitor called on her he found her in an unusually disturbed mood.

"Miss Adeline," Mr. Phipps said, threading his way between piles of books to where she sat on the window seat in the library, "I am really amazed to hear that . . ."

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"Well, I don't see why you hould be amazed—it's mostly your loing." She fumbled in the volumi- ious folds of the lilac tea-gown she vas wearing and produced a yel- owed newspaper clipping which he waved angrily in his face. 'That was the item you had in- erted in South American papers ast year when I was so ill, saying hat you wanted to get in touch with Ambrose." She glared at him as he sat down gingerly at the oth- er end of the window seat. "I hope you are satisfied now!"

Mr. Phipps moved a Persian cat o one side and regarded Miss Ade- line warily. "Are you sure that this man *is* your brother Ambrose?"

Her mouth set mulishly. "I've no intention of discussing this with you. I'm very cross."

"After all," Mr. Phipps went on determinedly, "you last saw Am- brose fifteen years ago when he came over on a short visit from South America and left rather sud- denly after only a week's stay. I hardly remember him myself. This man may be an imposter, someone who had met your brother in South America and was reminded of the encounter on seeing that no- tice in the paper . . ."

"Then it's all your fault for put- ting it in the paper," Miss Adeline pointed out pettishly. "It was a very irresponsible action on your part. I told you at the time that I didn't agree!"

Mr. Phipps closed his eyes, breathed quietly for a few mo- ments, then said, "Miss Adeline, this man may be some scoundrel after your money."

"I haven't any money—just a few hundred a year that father . . ."

"Your mother," said Mr. Phipps firmly, "left you a substantial sum which, against better advice, you insisted on withdrawing from the bank because you didn't trust the bank manager."

Miss Adeline became evasive. "Oh, that was years and years ago. I haven't got it now."

"Just the same, for the sake of your safety I think I should make some inquiries on your behalf . . ."

"I think you have done quite enough on my behalf. If it wasn't for your inquiries he wouldn't be here now."

Mr. Phipps leaned forward and fixed Miss Adeline with a hard stare. "Has it never struck you as odd that you have received no word from your brother since he left here?"

Miss Adeline returned Mr. Phipp's stare, unflinching. "No. It has never struck me as odd at all."

"Has it never struck you," Mr. Phipps continued doggedly, "that something might have happened to your brother? Doesn't a rather sinister possibility occur to you in connection with this man?"

"There's nothing sinister about him," Miss Adeline snapped. "He's too kind, if anything. In the short time he's been here he's done so

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many useful things I hardly feel I'm living in my own house. He's gone through all my papers and put them in order, he's cleaned up all the room except this one, and he's been through all the junk boxes. And now he's digging up the garden for me."

Mr. Phipps stood up. "I strongly recommend you to go to the police," he said.

"It wouldn't be the slightest use," Miss Adeline answered indifferently. "I go to them at least twice a week and they *never* take any notice of me."

When the door slammed behind Mr. Phipps, Miss Adeline decided to cry. Life had suddenly become so annoying and inconvenient that she felt the need for some emotional release. Her face began to crumple, and she was just withdrawing a handkerchief from the folds of the lilac tea-gown when the man appeared in the doorway. He was breathing heavily and his face was gray about the mouth. Miss Adeline, momentarily diverted from her own distress, regarded him with interest.

"You have been overworking in the garden," she said. "Would you like a little brandy? I believe I have some."

"Murder!" the man said in a trembling voice. "He accused me of murder!"

"I'm sure he never mentioned anything so unpleasant."

"I could sue him for slander!"

"Really, what a fuss you are making! You are far too sensitive."

The man edged nearer to her. "Will he go to the police, do you think?"

Miss Adeline was reminded of her own grievance and her mouth drooped. "Oh, I wouldn't be surprised. He has pestered me for years to try to find you, and now that he's got you here that doesn't please him either. It's so unreasonable."

"He's after your money. Can't you see that?" The man was beginning to babble. "He's trying to discredit me in order to get hold of your money." He leaned forward and his sweaty fingers closed over Miss Adeline's frail hand. "If only you would tell me where . . ."

Miss Adeline got to her feet. "I don't discuss money problems," she said with dignity. "It has been my experience in the past that it always leads to unpleasantness."

The man did not let go of her hand. "This time," he said softly, "it might lead to unpleasantness if you don't talk."

He let her go and she hurried out of the room. She went quickly up the stairs, longing for the relief of tears; but when she reached her bedroom and sank down in the low, comfortable armchair by the window, she found that she could not cry. She held her handkerchief poised in her hand, but the tears would not come.

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After a time, deciding that work was a solace for care, Miss Adeline went down to the kitchen and made a curry for supper. The recipe was for four and she became confused when she tried to adjust the quantities, ending up by halving the meat and rice, and doubling the curry powder. The man, who always attacked his food with concentrated passion, swallowed a third of his portion in one mouthful, then leaped to his feet and rushed into the scullery. Miss Adeline, quite unnerved by this performance, put down her fork without tasting the meal. Strange sounds came from the kitchen. After a few minutes the man emerged, his face scarlet, and went snarling into the hall.

Miss Adeline no longer had an appetite. She pushed her plate to one side and went into the garden where she wandered round in the dark, playing with the cats and searching in a desultory way for her strawberries. It was very still and the air was dank. Miss Adeline's head began to throb and her mind was filled with obscure premonitions of disaster.

When she returned to the kitchen her head seemed worse: it was throbbing so badly that the sound reverberated through the house. It took some moments for Miss Adeline to realize that what she could hear was the noise of a hammer. When she did realize it, she became very alarmed.

She found the man in the dining room tapping lightly with the hammer at the side of the mantelpiece. Miss Adeline quivered.

"I won't have this!"

The man swung round, his hammer poised. She was obviously very angry and he was a little taken aback.

"I'm testing the structure for you." He pointed to a powdering of plaster on the floor. "It seems to be unsound."

"Well then," she retorted, "it's most unsafe for you to go knocking it about like that. You'll bring the whole house down on us."

"Very well, my dear. I don't want to upset you."

And after that he put the hammer away and only rapped on the walls with his knuckles. Miss Adeline was not appeased. She followed him from room to room still protesting angrily.

"You are creating a disturbance," she said.

"There is no one to disturb," he pointed out. "You have no near neighbors."

At last the tapping stopped. Miss Adeline, who had gone to her room to fetch some eau de cologne, found the man standing in the kitchen staring at the dilapidated wall-rug. Sweat ran down his sallow face.

"Now you've tired yourself out," she said, dabbing scent on her forehead. "You had better have something to eat and go to bed."

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"What is the other side of this wall?" he asked.

"Why, the dining room, of course."

He went to the door and looked toward the dining room. When he turned away his small eyes were very bright.

"Rather a thick wall, isn't it?"

"I don't notice these things, I'm afraid," Miss Adeline answered tremulously. "It's a fourteenth century house, of course, and they built solidly in those days . . ."

He brushed past her and opened the back door; from the darkness came the sound of rummaging in the tool shed. In a moment he returned with a large axe. He ripped down the wall-rug, took off his jacket, and rolled up his sleeves. The outlines of a door were visible where the wall-rug had hung. The man's face shone as he picked up the axe.

"I would rather you didn't do that." Miss Adeline, very agitated, plucked at his sleeve. "It's only an old passage which used to run under this house to a priory that was destroyed over two hundred years ago. I had it bricked up. It made the kitchen so drafty."

He shook his arm free. "And you had the money bricked up, too, I suppose. It's the kind of crazy thing you would do."

"There isn't any money," Miss Adeline cried distractedly. "It's all quite simple really, but people make such a fuss that I don't talk about it any more. I went to the bank and told them that I wanted to withdraw my money. The bank manager was a most unreliable man. I told him quite distinctly that I wanted to be paid in gold, but when I got home I found that he had given me paper money—and some of it was very dirty. I was so annoyed that I just threw it on the stove."

The man's fingers curled round the handle of the axe. "You expect me to believe that?" he jeered. "Then why don't you want this passage reopened?"

"Because," Miss Adeline said quietly as the axe swung back, "you will disturb Ambrose. And he's been there rather a long time."

The axe jerked and almost slipped out of the man's fingers.

"Ambrose?" he whispered.

"He was very violent," Miss Adeline said sadly. "A most difficult man. And when he found out about my having burned the money, he seemed to lose all control of himself. There was no living with him."

The man's lips trembled. "You mean, you . . .?"

"Yes. I'm afraid so. We had a most distressing scene here in the kitchen. I remember that I was heating the flatiron at the time."

The man sat down slowly at the table and put his head in his hands. Miss Adeline moved the axe to a safe distance and then came and patted him on the shoulder.

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"Why don't you finish your curry and then have a nice, long liedown?" she suggested soothingly.

The man raised his head and looked at the bowl of curry. Slowly he pushed his chair back; his face had become livid and one hand clutched his stomach.

"Dear me," Miss Adeline said. "Whatever is the matter now?"

He was already in the hall, fumbling with the catch of the front door. Miss Adeline came fluttering up behind him.

"You're leaving very suddenly," she said in a hurt voice. "I hope you don't feel I want to get rid of you?"

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EDITORS' FILE CARD

AUTHOR:	**LLOYD BIGGLE, JR.**
TITLE:	***Grandfather Predicts a Murder***
TYPE:	Detective Story
DETECTIVE:	Grandfather Rastin
LOCALE:	Borgville, Michigan
TIME:	1959
COMMENTS:	*Actually, it all started 50 years ago when Joe Hammer's horse lost a race to Borgville's first automobile, and Joe's best friend, Nat Barlow, lost 50 cents on the race. And it came to a head when Grandfather read a 1948 Almanac and began spouting crime statistics.*

MR. OBERMEYER, WHO IS PRINCIPAL of the Borgville High School, is a nut on quotations, and one day last winter he wrote on the board, "We find great things are made of little things, And little things go lessening till at last Comes God behind them."

I remember that one because I copied it down on the chance that I'd be able to figure it out later. I still don't understand it, but if I did, I think it might explain the connection between an old copy of the 1948 Almanac, a bet on a horse, and Borgville's first murder in twenty years. My Grandfather Rastin says there isn't any connection, and Sheriff Pilkins says there is, but there wouldn't be if Grandfather didn't talk so much. I'll tell you what happened and you can decide for yourself.

The Almanac belonged to Mr. Snubbs, who runs the Snubbs Hardware Store, and Mr. Snubbs was trying to throw it away when Grandfather got it. Every day except Sunday, Grandfather walks uptown about one o'clock and stops in at the hardware store to see if Mr. Snubbs is finished with the morning paper, and Mr. Snubbs always is, or if he isn't he says he is.

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When Grandfather went after the paper one day last March, Mr. Snubbs had a big pile of junk ready to be carted away, and a 1948 Almanac was on top, so Grandfather took it home to read.

I always thought an almanac was a place to look up something, like who won the 1929 World Series, or what time the sun is going to rise on Easter Sunday. I thought Grandfather knew that, too, or I'd have told him; but before I found out what was going on he'd read the thing through from cover to cover and was scaring us half to death with some of the statistics he quoted at the breakfast table.

I don't know anything about the bet on a horse except what I've heard, but I've heard plenty. Back in 1909 or 1910 Joe Hammer, who was then a young man of maybe 18, challenged the owner of the first automobile in Borgville to a race—the automobile against Joe's horse. At that time Nat Barlow was Joe's best friend, and Nat bet fifty cents on the horse.

People tell a lot of queer stories about that race, and they only agree on one thing: the automobile won by a radiator cap. Joe Hammer always claimed he lost because the horse threw a shoe crossing the Borgville Creek bridge. Nat Barlow's version was that the horse had more sense than the rider, and threw Joe Hammer while crossing the Borgville Creek bridge.

That's how Borgville's famous Nat Barlow-Joe Hammer feud got started. Nat is now a frail old man of seventy-five and so gentle he wouldn't swat if a horsefly bit him, and down through all the years he never saw Joe Hammer once without bringing up that race and his fifty cents.

And Joe Hammer, who was sixty-seven last January, threatened so many times to break Nat Barlow's neck that finally even Nat decided he was bluffing. There are always a few people around who take that kind of thing seriously, but most folks agreed with Grandfather. Grandfather is past eighty now and ever since 1910 he's been saying that it's nobody's business but Nat's and Joe's, and if those two youngsters want to fight it out, why—let 'em fight.

That was how things stood the first week of May. Grandfather had been reading and rereading that almanac for a couple of months, and Nat Barlow and Joe Hammer had been feuding over that fifty-cent bet for about fifty years, and if someone in Borgville had an idea about doing a murder, he was keeping it to himself.

It was Saturday and a warm, sunny day—just the kind of day Grandfather likes. He left the house early, and when I got uptown at twelve thirty he was sitting on the bench in front of Jake Palmer's Barber Shop, along with Nat Barlow and a couple of other old-timers. There was quite a

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crowd standing around—Walt Pobloch, who lives up above the barber shop, and Jeff Morgan, who works at the Dimmit Grocery Store and was on his way to the bank with a deposit, and Steve Carling, who is a deputy sheriff, and Joe Hammer's hired man Ed Seagrave, who had come to town to get a new head gasket for Joe's tractor and didn't seem in any hurry to get back, and a few others.

Grandfather hadn't gone after Snubbs' paper yet—he thinks it isn't ethical to take a man's morning paper away from him before one o'clock—so he was just sitting there listening to the others. In the middle of some talk about the fishing over on Forbes Lake, Grandfather grunted a couple of times, cleared his throat, and announced in a loud, clear voice, "This is 1959, and Borgville is going to have a murder this year."

That stopped the conversation. Steve Carling opened and closed his mouth three times and finally managed to say, "What makes you think so?"

"Logic," Grandfather said. "In 1946, there were 109 persons murdered in Detroit. Estimating Detroit's population at that time as one and three-quarter millions, that figures out to about one murder for every sixteen thousand people. There are about eight hundred people in Borgville, which gives us one murder every twenty years. And—" Grandfather pointed a finger "—do you know when the last murder happened here?"

None of them did. "1939," Grandfather said, and leaned back on bench and crossed his legs.

"Poppycock," Steve Carling said. As a deputy sheriff he naturally considered himself an authority on murder, even if he'd never had one to solve. "Crime in a big city isn't the same thing as crime in a rural area. And what does 1946 have to do with it?"

I could have told Steve about the almanac and that crime statistics in a 1948 almanac were complete only through 1946. I could have told him, but I didn't, and it was a cinch that Grandfather wasn't going to.

Grandfather pointed his finger again. "When," he demanded, "did the last Borgville murder take place *before* 1939?" Steve didn't know. "1919," Grandfather said. "Exactly twenty years. Mary Randall killed her husband with his shotgun. He come home drunk and beat her and the kids, and after he went to sleep she shot him. The jury acquitted her."

"Coincidence," Steve said. "Anyway, Borgville's population wasn't 800 in 1919."

"Was," Grandfather said.

"Anyway, crime statistics change from year to year. You can't predict a Borgville murder this year just because of what happened in Detroit in 1946."

"This is Borgville's year," Grandfather said. "1959."

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Steve muttered something about Grandfather being afflicted with hardening of the cranium, and walked away. The rest of them just sat or stood quietly waiting for someone to think of a way to change the subject.

"Nice day," Nat Barlow said finally.

As a subject-changer that didn't seem worth much, but everyone jumped at it. Everyone except Grandfather. He snorted, then craned his neck to look at the clock in the window of the Borgville Pharmacy. "Johnny," he said, "go see if Snubbs is finished with his paper."

I went over to the hardware store, got the paper, and took it back to Grandfather. The crowd had broken up by then, but if you think that ended the matter you don't know Grandfather. He commands a lot of respect, even if he is the only registered Democrat in Borgville, and people listen to what he says.

Less than an hour later I was over at the Borgville Pharmacy, trying to talk Mollie Adams into putting an extra scoop of ice cream into my chocolate soda, and I heard Doc Beyers say to Mr. Ferguson, "Who do you think it will be?"

"That's easy," Mr. Ferguson said. "Nat Barlow. Who else?"

They were talking about who was going to be murdered.

Now Borgville had only one feud going and nearly everyone had heard Joe Hammer threaten Nat Barlow with everything from neck-wringing to head-bashing. Like I said, some people took it seriously, and most of the rest were willing to go along with a gag.

For a week or so the standing joke around Borgville was to ask if Nat was still with us. Nat didn't like it, and it made Joe Hammer so mad that a couple of times it looked as if he might pass up Nat and murder someone else. But nothing happened, and Grandfather's prediction might have been forgotten if some of the men hadn't enjoyed joshing him about it.

"When's the murder coming off?" they'd ask.

And Grandfather would say, "Lots of time between now and December 31st." And then he'd tell them something about the number of murders in Baltimore and Fort Worth—in 1946, of course.

School let out the twelth of June. I got a summer job in the Borgville Pharmacy and lost it five days later when I was horsing around with Mollie Adams after closing; I tipped over a display and broke seventeen bottles of hair oil. Grandfather marched right over to Mr. Ferguson's house, when he heard about it, and told him he had no business making all that fuss over a few bottles of hair oil, and Mr. Ferguson told Grandfather that a bald-headed man had no right to any kind of opinion about hair oil.

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I didn't get the job back, and the only result was that Mr. Ferguson ordered Grandfather out of his house, and Grandfather swore he'd never set foot in the Borgville Pharmacy again; now he makes me walk all the way down to Dimmit's Grocery Store for his tobacco. All of which has nothing to do with this, except to explain how I happened to be loose uptown the day of the murder.

It was the next Monday and the afternoon was more than just sunny. It was hot. Grandfather was reading Snubbs' paper on the bench in front of the barber shop, and Nat Barlow was sitting there beside him, not saying anything because the quickest way to get Grandfather riled up is to try to talk to him when he's reading.

Steve Carling came coasting up in his car and angle-parked at the curb. He got out and stood there for a minute, looking up and down Main Street; then he walked over and said, "Afternoon, Nat."

"Afternoon," Nat said.

"Anything doing uptown this morning?" Steve said.

"Nothing much," Nat said.

"Was you here all morning?"

"Right here," Nat said, patting the bench.

"What time did you go home for lunch?"

"When I always go," Nat said "Noon."

"Anybody see you sitting here after eleven o'clock?"

"Anybody that went by."

"Who went by?"

Nat shrugged. "Can't say. Wasn't paying much attention."

Grandfather lowered his paper. "What idiotic stunt are you trying to pull now?"

Steve said to Nat, "Where were you at twelve o'clock?"

"Here," Nat said. "And I started home right at twelve."

"All right. We'll check on it. Meantime, you're under arrest. Come along."

Nat didn't even protest. His face got all puckered up and he was almost too shocked to breathe. Steve took his arm and steered him towards his car, but before they'd taken two steps Grandfather let out a bellow and got in their way. "What idiotic stunt . . ."

"Interfering with an officer of the law," Steve said, "calls for a jail sentence."

"You'll tell me what the devil you're up to," Grandfather said, "or I'll turn you over my knee and paddle you. Jail sentence be damned!"

Steve quieted down. Most people do when Grandfather looks at them like that. "You ought to be happy," Steve said. "You got your murder. Joe Hammer was stabbed in the back with a pitchfork. Nat did it. We got a witness."

"Horsefeathers!" Grandfather said.

But Steve got Nat into the front seat of his car and then started

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around to the driver's side. Grandfather opened the back door and hopped in, and I was right behind him. Steve didn't make us welcome, but he got in without saying anything and drove off.

The Joe Hammer farm is on Hog Back Road, which intersects Borgville Road a couple of miles south of town. Hog Back Road is an insult to any respectable hog, it being all ups and downs and so crooked in places a car runs the risk of a head-on collision with itself. Steve took those curves at a good forty miles an hours, and Grandfather, who hates to ride in the back seat anyway, planted his feet wide apart and hung onto the door handle and told Steve between curves just what he thought of his driving.

There was already a crowd of people at the Hammer place. Steve got Nat out of the car, and Sheriff Pilkins saw them and pointed to an empty corn crib. Steve nodded and led Nat away. Doc Beyers was talking to the sheriff, and a couple of deputies were making motions at keeping the crowd back. Grandfather barged past them and went storming up to Sheriff Pilkins.

"Your nose isn't needed!" the sheriff shouted.

Grandfather shouted right back at him. "You trying to make a damned fool of yourself?"

The sheriff called to one of his deputies. "Mort, get him out of here. Didn't I tell you . . ."

"I'm a deputy," Grandfather said. "I got as much right here as you have."

Sheriff Pilkins and my Grandfather have never been close friends, but back in 1937, when the Borgville bank was robbed, the sheriff made Grandfather a deputy for a couple of days, and Grandfather has called himself a deputy ever since—that is, whenever it suits him. Sheriff Pilkins doesn't like it, but he learned long ago that arguing with Grandfather is a waste of time. So he told Mort to get back to the crowd, and he let Grandfather stay. I stayed, too, but I think that was mainly because I ducked behind a manure spreader and the sheriff didn't see me.

Grandfather and the sheriff went over to the corn crib, and I went around to the side and looked through the slats. Ed Seagrave, the Hammers' hired man, was sitting on a milk can. Steve Carling was standing off to one side, with Nat Barlow. The sheriff went in and stood looking down at Ed.

Ed isn't much more than twenty-five, and he's a big, husky fellow and not bad-looking. His face was already burned dark, from working in the fields, but there in the corn crib it had a kind of sickly gray color. His hands were gripped together in his lap and he didn't even look up at the sheriff.

"All right," Sheriff Pilkins said. "Talk."

"He was like a father to me," Ed said.

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"Sure. You worked here—how many years?"

"Five-six."

"Sure. Joe was like a father to you, but that won't catch me a murderer. Tell what you know."

"I don't know nothing. I went in the barn—and there he was. The pitchfork was sticking straight up, like somebody'd stuck it in the ground, only it was . . ." He started to whimper.

Sheriff Pilkins reached out and slapped his face. "Snap out of it," he said. "I can't waste time on you."

"You've already wasted time," Grandfather said.

Sheriff Pilkins spun around. "Keep your trap closed, Bill Rastin, or I'll run you out of here." He turned back to Ed. "Now give it to me—everything that happened up to when you found Joe."

"I was cultivating corn," Ed said. "The south field. Joe came out about eleven to see how I was getting along. Wanted to know if I'd be through by noon, and I said I doubted it, but I might make it by twelve thirty. So he said to go on and finish and we'd have a late lunch. So I did. I finished and then I went back to the house. And Mrs. Hammer said Joe was in the barn and would I call him to lunch, so I went out to the barn and . . ."

"What time was that?"

"After twelve thirty, but not much."

"Okay. Then you ran over to the Schmidts, and you found out they already knew about it and had called me, and you came back with them. Right?"

"I didn't know how to tell Mrs. Hammer, and I thought Mrs. Schmidt . . ."

"All right. I don't blame you. Why'd you run? Why didn't you take the car?"

"I just didn't think."

"Anything else?"

Ed shook his head.

"Stick around," the sheriff said. "I might want you again."

Ed stumbled out the door, went over and sat down under a shade tree, and buried his face in his hands. The sheriff turned to Steve Carling and told him to get Dave Schmidt in there.

Dave is about sixteen and a smart kid, but when Steve brought him in he did nothing but blubber for two minutes. I never saw anybody so scared. But the sheriff finally got him quieted down and got his story. Seems that Dave admired the old sedan Joe had for a second car. He thought it would make a swell hot rod, but Joe wouldn't part with it. Then Mrs. Hammer had called him up about noon that day and told him Joe was griping about the cost of insuring two cars, and if he came over right away Joe might be in a mood to let him have it cheap.

Dave got his dad's car and came right over. The barn door was

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open, and he looked in and saw Joe. That one look was enough for him. He jumped back in the car and took off for home. Only when he got there he was so excited and upset that it took a while for his folks to get the story out of him. When they did, they called the sheriff, and then Ed Seagrave arrived, and they all came back together.

"You didn't go into the barn at all?" the sheriff asked.

Dave shook his head.

"Suppose he hadn't been dead," the sheriff said. "Suppose he was only hurt. Maybe you could have helped him."

"With *that* in his back?" Dave said.

The sheriff waved him away. As soon as Dave had gone, he turned to Nat Barlow. "What about this little disagreement you and Joe been having?" he said.

Nat swallowed, making a regular production out of it. "It didn't amount to much," he said.

"Ever since I was a kid I been hearing about what Joe was going to do to you. You didn't maybe decide you'd do it to him first, did you?"

"No," Nat whispered.

"Maybe it was self-defense," the sheriff suggested. "He got you in the barn, and you knew what he was up to, so when you got a chance you used the pitchfork."

"No!"

Sheriff Pilkins reared back and shouted. "Then what were you doing running away from the barn?"

"Wasn't," Nat said.

"Mrs. Hammer saw you."

"She didn't!" Nat squeaked. "I haven't been on this farm since 1909."

Steve Carling spoke up. "He says he was sitting in front of the barber shop until twelve."

"All right. If he was there, somebody saw him. If he wasn't—take him in, and we'll start checking."

He turned, and there was Stella Hammer in the doorway. I'd always thought she was a nice-looking woman, though maybe a little on the skinny side, and she always dressed real classy-like; but that day she had an old dress on and her hair was a wild mess. She looked taller and skinnier than I'd ever seen her. She kind of clawed at the air and made gurgling noises. Then she screamed.

"He did it!" Her hands made clawing motions at Nat. "Stabbed Joe in the back and ran. I saw him running away." She screamed again, then suddenly pitched forward. Sheriff Pilkins caught her, and by then the women who were supposed to be looking after her had missed her, and they came running and took charge of her.

Sheriff Pilkins got out a big red handkerchief and mopped his forehead. "Get Nat out of here," he said, and Steve took him away.

"Pilkins," Grandfather said, "you're an idiot."

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The sheriff lit a cigarette and puffed it a couple of times, fast. "Rastin," he said, "you and I don't admire each other much, but tell me this. Have you ever known me to be unfair to anybody?"

"Not intentionally."

"All right. Stella Hammer says it was Nat. No, strike that. Now she says it was Nat. At first she said she thought it looked like it might be Nat. She says she was looking out when Dave drove up. As he was getting out of the car she saw somebody run from the other side of the barn. She says he was wearing blue overalls, like Nat always wears, and a straw hat; but it's a hell of a long ways from the house to the barn, and it's only about twenty yards from the barn to the brush along the road, and he was running with his back towards her. Dave never saw him, because the barn was in the way, and he was hid by the time Dave drove off. Stella said maybe it was Nat, and there's been all this trouble between Nat and Joe, so I have to look into it. Of course I'll be looking into a lot of other angles, just in case. That's how matters stand right now, and you can't say I'm not being fair about it."

Grandfather grunted.

"As long as you're here," the sheriff said, "you might as well make yourself useful. You know everything about everybody around here. Who's been having trouble with Joe Hammer lately?"

"Schmidt has," Grandfather said. "Something about a boundary line."

The sheriff got out his handkerchief again. "Now that's real interesting. We know it couldn't have been Dave Schmidt. Stella backs him up that he never went in the barn. She thought he asked Joe through the door about the car, and Joe said no, and Dave beat it. But the kid was powerfully upset. Do you suppose he did see someone running, and that it was his old man?"

"I wouldn't know," Grandfather said.

"Anyone else?"

"Not worth mentioning."

"Any recent scandal about Joe and Stella?"

"It's a little late for scandal now," Grandfather said. "They just celebrated their twenty-fifth wedding anniversary last month. People talked when they got married, because Joe was past forty and she wasn't twenty yet, but I never heard but that they got along all right."

"What about Ed Seagrave?"

"He's not overly bright," Grandfather said, "as maybe you've noticed. Joe always said he's a darned good worker. Joe liked him and I guess Ed liked Joe."

"Most everybody liked Joe," the sheriff said, "except Nat Barlow." He went over to the door. "Hey, Schmidt!" he yelled.

Mr. Schmidt came over. He's a big blond man, with a big face and

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a big smile, and he doesn't look anything like Dave. He talks kind of funny. He said, "Ya?"

"Want to talk to yóu," the sheriff said.

Grandfather came out, looked around, and saw me. "Come on," he said.

As we walked away, the sheriff was saying to Schmidt, "What were you doing between eleven and twelve?"

"Pilkins is an idiot," Grandfather said.

We got a ride back to town, and Grandfather went right up to his room, closed the door, and a minute later I heard him rocking. The madder he is about something, the faster he rocks, and this time it sounded like a freight train overhead.

The next morning Grandfather was up early, and after breakfast he walked uptown. It was the first time in years that he'd bothered to go uptown in the morning, and when he came home at noon he wasn't looking very happy.

"They can't find any witnesses for Nat," he said. "With him sitting on a bench right there on Main Street, you'd think *someone* would have noticed him, but he's always sitting there, and people have stopped looking at him. They say, 'Sure, I saw him,' and then when they think about it they can't remember if he was there or not. It's like asking about a lamppost. Everyone knows it's there, but no one remembers *seeing* it."

"That's too bad," I said.

"Everyone else has an alibi. Schmidt was with his wife, eating lunch. Harvey Lennox was working in the next field and he says Ed was driving the tractor right up to half-past twelve. Even Stella Hammer has an alibi. From eleven up to when she called Dave Schmidt she spent most of her time on the telephone. Pilkins has checked and he doesn't figure she could have gotten out to the barn and back between calls. Not that he was suspecting her, anyway. Women don't usually do their murders with pitchforks. It don't look good for Nat."

It didn't look good for Grandfather, either. I'd never seen him looking so miserable. "Johnny," he said, "we got to pull Nat out of this."

"All we have to do is find one person that saw him sitting there," I said.

After lunch Grandfather and I combed Borgville from one end to the other. I took the north half of town and Grandfather took the south half, and when we met in front of Jake Palmer's barber shop at three thirty neither of us was happy.

Borgville on a Monday morning is not exactly dead, but it isn't kicking very much, either. Practically nobody had been uptown that morning. Mr. Snubbs had seen Nat

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at nine, when he went out to clean his front window. Chuck Foster, who delivers bread to the Dimmit Grocery Store, had seen him there when he went by at ten thirty. Mr. Hansen, the bank president, went into the barber shop for a haircut just before noon, but he said he was in a hurry and didn't notice whether Nat was there or not. He often doesn't notice things. Grandfather said the fact that Nat was the first person in line when the run on the Borgville bank started, back in 1933, probably had something to do with Mr. Hansen not seeing him, but I don't think Grandfather was serious.

"Your mother's calling some of the farmers to see who was in town yesterday morning," Grandfather said. "Let's go home and see if she found out anything."

We went home, and she hadn't, and Grandfather went up to his rocking chair.

Sheriff Pilkins dropped in at noon the next day. He knew Grandfather was working on an alibi for Nat, and he wanted to know if he'd found out anything. He took one look at Grandfather's face, then didn't bother to ask.

"It looks like it was Nat," the Sheriff said. "Taking a short cut, he could have got to the Hammer place in thirty minutes, easy, just strolling along. I tried it myself this morning."

"Didn't anyone see him going home for lunch?" Grandfather said.

"Nope. His daughter was over at Wiston, and when she's gone he fixes his own lunch. So it looks like Nat, but like I said, I aim to be fair about it. I'll keep checking."

"Come up to my room," Grandfather said. "I want to talk to you."

The sheriff grumbled, but he went, and when they came down ten minutes later he seemed almost grateful. "You know," he said, "that idea isn't bad at all. I'm glad you thought of it. It might help or it might make things worse—but I'll give it a try."

"When?" Grandfather said.

"Right after lunch. I suppose you want to be there?"

"I aim to be. And you be darned sure you don't start anything until I get there."

"One thirty," the sheriff said. "Stella's staying with the Schmidts. I'll stop over there and get her."

We got to the Schmidts at five minutes and thirty-seven seconds after one, and we'd have made it a half hour earlier if Mom hadn't put her foot down and told Grandfather that his digestion was his own worry, but I was still a growing boy and she wouldn't have me rushing lunch. It was the only time Grandfather ever rode with me that he complained about me driving too slow.

Schmidt saw us drive up and he came trotting down to the house to see what we wanted. Mrs. Schmidt

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and Mrs. Hammer were sitting on the Schmidt's big front porch, Mrs. Hammer sewing something, and Mrs. Schmidt resting a mite, she said, after the noon dishes. Grandfather grabbed a lawn chair and announced that he was waiting for the sheriff. Schmidt was too polite to ask questions, so he sat down to wait with him.

Mrs. Schmidt came over to talk to Grandfather. She said Mrs. Hammer was taking it real well, and wanted to go home and make sure things were being looked after properly, but she was going to keep her there until after the funeral. Mrs. Hammer could have heard what they were saying without stretching her ears much, but she didn't seem to be paying any attention. She'd prettied herself up some, and looked nice, sitting there sewing.

Grandfather decided he wanted to know how much of the Hammer farm could be seen from Schmidt's place. He found a spot at the far end of the yard where we could see one end of the Hammer barn, and he said, "If you'd been standing here, you could have seen that murderer running from the barn."

Schmidt said, in that funny talk of his, that maybe that was true, but he hadn't been there. He'd been in the house eating lunch.

"Too bad," Grandfather said.

We went back to the house. Mrs. Hammer still didn't seem to pay any attention to us, and I got the idea she wished people would stop bothering her. For one thing, she acted nervous. I noticed that when she started to thread her needle. She was a powerful long time at it, and I felt like going up and steadying her hand for her, but I wasn't sure how she'd take it. Finally Mrs. Schmidt saw she was having trouble, so she went over and threaded it for her.

The sheriff arrived a little after one thirty and took Mrs. Hammer into the house for a talk. She seemed glad to see him, and if she was nervous when they came out she sure didn't show it. We loaded the Schmidts into our car and the sheriff took Mrs. Hammer, and we drove over to the Hammer place.

There were six deputies waiting for us, along with Nat Barlow and quite a few other men. There was also a message from the county attorney, telling the sheriff he wanted to see what happened and not to start anything until he got there. Sheriff Pilkins paced up and down and used language not fit for women and children, but it was all right, because Mrs. Hammer and Mrs. Schmidt had gone into the house, and I was the youngest one there, and he didn't use any words I hadn't heard before.

"I want to look around," Grandfather told the sheriff. "I'll be back."

"Don't strain yourself," the sheriff said. "Nobody'll cry if you don't make it."

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We found Ed Seagrave behind the house, talking with Mrs. Hammer. Only Mrs. Hammer seemed to be doing all the talking. She was giving it to him but good, and by the time we got there Mrs. Schmidt was out trying to quiet her down.

". . . shiftless, stupid bum," Mrs. Hammer was saying. "All these years on this farm and he doesn't know what needs to be done from one day to the next without someone telling him! I told you I was needed here."

Grandfather grabbed Ed's arm and led him away, and he didn't seem unhappy to leave. He mopped his face with a handkerchief and allowed that he'd never had any trouble as long as Joe was running things, and if Mrs. Hammer was going to be that hard to get along with there were other jobs. Why, only yesterday Old Man Ashley had asked him . . .

"Never mind," Grandfather said. "Where was it you were cultivating the day Joe was killed?"

"South end of the field," Ed said. "Down towards the creek."

"Show me," Grandfather said.

Ed led us down a lane, opened a gate, and we followed him across the cornfield, up a rise, and then down the long slope towards the creek.

"I was wondering if the murderer could have seen you out here," Grandfather said.

"Naw," Ed said. "When you're down here you can't even see the barn, and only the top part of the house. He couldn't have seen me."

"He could hear the tractor, though," Grandfather said. "He'd know where you were and he'd know that as long as he could hear the tractor you wouldn't be interrupting him."

"Yeah," Ed said. "I never thought of that."

We walked down to the creek, and Grandfather looked around and scratched away at his bald head. "That's real interesting," he said. "You can see the top of Schmidt's house from here, though you can't see it from back there. Trees are in the way. And you can see the whole second story of the Hammer's house, but you can't see the barn at all. That's real interesting. Don't you think so, Johnny? Look."

I looked. The Hammer house, sticking up behind the hill, looked just like any house would look sticking up like that, and in the other direction all I could see was Schmidt's chimney and the peak of the roof.

"I'm going over to talk to Harvey Lennox," Grandfather said. "You wait back at the house, Johnny, and come after me in a hurry if the county attorney shows up before I get back."

I went back to the house and waited around, trying to keep out of the way. More people kept arriving and a bunch of kids showed up from town, riding bicycles.

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Dave Schmidt came over, looking for his parents, and then Grandfather came back, bringing Mr. Lennox with him, and Grandfather took two of the kids aside—it was the Carson twins—and had a talk with them. I was getting pretty tired waiting, and so was everyone else, and the sheriff's face looked redder every time I looked at him.

County Attorney Holder showed up about three thirty, and bobbed his white head around apologizing to everyone for being late. He even apologized to those who had no business there anyway, which seemed nice of him. The sheriff bustled around getting things organized, and finally it dawned on me what they were going to do.

Mrs. Hammer was in the house, standing at the kitchen window. Nat Barlow and the deputies and some other men were down in the barn, all dressed alike—blue overalls and straw hats. The idea was that they were going to run, one at a time, from the barn over to the bushes along the road, and Mrs. Hammer would tell the sheriff if she saw one that ran the way the murderer ran.

Ed Seagrave was still hanging around, and he said to me, "Let's go down and watch."

I saw that Grandfather had picked himself a choice location, right under Mrs. Hammer's window, so I told Ed I'd rather hang around the house. Ed and the two Schmidts and a couple of others went down and sat on the rail fence by the barn. Then the sheriff decided everything was ready, and waved his arm.

Nothing happened. I looked at the sheriff again, and as a result I almost missed the first runner. He was just vanishing into the bushes when I turned.

"No," Mrs. Hammer said.

The sheriff waved again, and we got Number Two.

Now I want you to get the picture. Joe Hammer built the house for his bride before they were married. She was a town girl, and she was determined she wasn't going to have any barn smells in her house, and by gosh she didn't, even when the wind was right. Joe built the house that far from the barn.

So there we were, standing by the house and looking down the slope at the barn a good three hundred yards away. Those fellows didn't run very fast, but they all looked alike to me, and you didn't get more than a quick look at their backs before they were out of sight. And every time one ran, Mrs. Hammer would sing out, "No," and the sheriff would wave for the next one.

We got as far as Number Seven before anything interesting happened. Then Mrs. Hammer let out a squalk.

"That's him!" she yelled. "That's the one!"

"All right," the sheriff said, writ-

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ing something in his notebook. And he waved for the next runner. We got through Number Ten without anything else happening, and then the deputies herded them all back into the barn and started over again. That round Mrs. Hammer squalked on Number Three, and the sheriff made a note of it and ran the rest of them.

"Who were they?" the county attorney said.

"Darned if I know," Sheriff Pilkins said. "Steve Carling is keeping a list. Here he comes."

Steve came trotting up waving a piece of paper and the sheriff said, "Number Seven of the first bunch. Who was it?"

Steve looked at his list, and blinked. "Nat Barlow," he said.

"Number Three of the second."

"Nat Barlow."

"Well, now!" The county attorney's grin moved his ears back a couple of inches on both sides. "Well, now! That does wrap it up. That was a fine idea." He pounded Grandfather on the back and Grandfather looked like he was about to punch him in the nose. "Thanks a lot, Bill," the county attorney said. "You've been a big help."

"I sure have," Grandfather said.

"You ready to admit now that it was Nat?" the sheriff said.

"Nope," Grandfather said.

Sheriff Pilkins was about as surprised as a man can be. "You aren't?" he said.

"Loyalty," the county attorney said, "is a fine quality, among friends. But when the duty of public office weighs heavily on a man's shoulders, his first loyalty belongs to the people. To the principle of law and order. To justice. All men stand equal before the law, and even when the finger of guilt points an old friend—and I want you to know that Nat Barlow is an old friend of mine, and a cherished friend at that . . ."

"Aw, shut up!" Grandfather said.

"I fully understand your bitterness . . ."

"You're a tank-headed idiot," Grandfather said. "You and Pilkins both. You're all set to convict an innocent man of murder, and I'm almost tempted to let you do it, and then show you up for the ignoramuses you are. But that time in jail, and a trial, would kill Nat, so I aim to straighten this mess out before I go home today. Let's go down to the barn."

They both started to argue, but Grandfather gave them that cold stare of his, and they quieted down and came along. All of us went, except Mrs. Hammer and Mrs. Schmidt, who stayed in the house. In the barn we met the crowd that had been doing the running, and Nat Barlow was with them, with a couple of deputies watching him like he was some dangerous desperado. He looked pretty darned worried and unhappy, as if his last

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friend had just kicked him.

"Ed," Grandfather said, "come over here."

Ed Seagrave ambled over. Grandfather stood there for a minute, looking around as if he wanted to be sure he had everyone's attention. And he had it. The sheriff and the county attorney were hardly breathing.

"Ed," Grandfather said, "we want to get a couple of things straight. You were out there running the tractor until about twelve thirty and then you went up to the house. Mrs. Hammer told you Joe was in the barn, and you went down there and found him dead, and you ran over to tell the Schmidts. Right?"

"Right," Ed said.

"Now think. Beyond that, did you hear anything or see anything?"

"Couldn't hear anything above the tractor," Ed said.

"Yeah. Harvey Lennox was working the next field, so we know you were running that tractor right through to twelve thirty. All right. Where are them kids?"

The Carson twins pushed through the crowd and stood there, looking plenty nervous.

"What were you doing Monday morning?" Grandfather said.

Jerry Carson spoke up. He always does the talking for the two of them. "We were swimming," he said. "Over at the Ashley's swimming hole."

"That's the creek that cuts past this farm, isn't it?" Grandfather said.

They both nodded.

"What'd you do when you got through swimming?"

"We waded up the creek a ways," Jerry said, and Harold nodded.

"What for?"

"Nothing much. We were catching frogs and stuff."

"See anything interesting?"

"When we got up this way we saw a tractor."

"What tractor?"

"Hammer's tractor," Jerry said. "It was sitting there in the field all by itself, with the motor running."

"Is that all?"

"Well, then we saw Ed come sneaking down the lane. He ran down and jumped on the tractor and started off."

"What time was that?" Grandfather said.

"Don't know exactly. Along about noon, I guess."

"Where's Lennox?" Grandfather said. "Harvey, could you see that tractor from where you were working?"

"Nope," Lennox said. "Just heard it, that's all. I was fixing fence over on the far side of the field. Couldn't see down in the draw from there. I heard the tractor all the time, but like I told you this afternoon, when I got to thinking about it, seems to me it was idling there for quite a spell, and then it started up again."

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"How about it, Ed?" Grandfather said.

Ed didn't say anything.

"You might as well tell us about it," Grandfather said. "Mrs. Hammer admits now that she saw you going down to the barn a little *before* Dave Schmidt got there. She says she don't know why you killed Joe, but once it was done it couldn't be undone, and she felt sorry for you."

If Mrs. Hammer'd been there that minute there'd been another murder. "That bitch!" Ed yelled. "The whole thing was *her* idea. She told me when to do it and exactly how." It took the sheriff and three deputies to quiet him down.

Grandfather nodded. "Pulled the shade down in an upstairs window to let you know Joe had gone out to the barn, and everything was ready, didn't she? And it's still down. Mrs. Schmidt carried her away afterwards, and she forgot all about it."

Ed talked then and spilled the works. How Mrs. Hammer had gotten real friendly with him, and how they took to carrying on when Joe wasn't around, and finally how Mrs. Hammer planned to get rid of Joe. She sent Ed out early Monday morning to knock down a stretch of Harvey Lennon's fence, and then about the middle of the morning she called Harvey to tell him it was down, knowing he'd have to fix it right away to keep the cows out of his corn. And then when Mrs. Hammer got Joe out to the barn, and saw Mr. Lennon working where he could hear the tractor but not see it, she gave Ed the signal, and as soon as she saw him leave the barn she called Dave Schmidt so the body would be discovered while Ed was out in the field. Of course there wasn't no murderer running away. Mrs. Hammer made that up.

One of the sheriff's deputies got it all down and when Ed was finished the two deputies turned Nat Barlow loose. He came over and hugged Grandfather and cried on his shoulder. Just for a moment I thought Grandfather was going to cry, too. The way those two have always jawed at each other, I never would have thought they felt that way.

"I really don't know what to say," the county attorney said.

"You usually don't," Grandfather said. "But you say it anyway."

"Those Carson boys—how did you happen onto them? They'll have to testify at the trial."

"No, they won't," Grandfather said. "They weren't anywhere near this place on Monday. That was just a little scheme we cooked up together. And I owe them both a treat." He fished in his pocket and came up with two quarters. "Here you are, kids," he said. "But I hope you won't buy them from that cheapskate Ferguson."

The twins took the quarters, grinned, and backed away.

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"Amazing!" the county attorney said. "But how did you figure it out?"

"It didn't take much figuring," Grandfather said. "Mrs. Hammer is in her forties, which is a dangerous age for a woman. Joe was nearly seventy, and here was a strong, good-looking young fellow living with them, and even if he is kind of dumb he maybe seemed more attractive than an old husband. In case you haven't heard, that sort of thing is called a triangle. The big city papers talk about it all the time, and what happens there can happen here. Now in Detroit, in 1946 . . ."

Sheriff Pilkins interrupted. "I'd better go and have it out with Stella," he said. "That woman's been too smart for her own good. The way she planned this thing . . ."

"She coached Ed pretty good, too," Grandfather said. "The two of them put on a good act Monday. Today, too."

"They did," the sheriff said. "And don't you go around sticking your chest out over this, Rastin. The whole business is your fault."

"How's that?" Grandfather asked.

"You and your murder prediction. You were telling everyone that Borgville would have a murder this year, and Ed heard you and told Stella about it, and between them they went and made a prophet out of you. I expect you're too old to learn to keep your mouth shut, but you might give it a try."

Grandfather leaned forward, stuck his jaw out at the sheriff, and prodded Pilkins' chest with one finger. "Now let me tell you something! If you had an ounce of brains—just one ounce, mind you—you wouldn't have needed me to straighten you out on this. Even if you was too dumb to see anything else, that little deal we staged this afternoon gave it away. Want to know how? Stella Hammer picked Nat Barlow both times when you and I and everyone else up by the house couldn't tell him from Adam. And Stella's eyes have been bad all her life. She never would wear glasses, because she thought they'd ruin her looks, but she's needed them ever since she was a kid. Just this afternoon, over at Schmidt's, she couldn't even thread a needle. *And yet she picked Nat both times!* Got it figured out yet?"

The sheriff didn't say anything.

"Ed was sitting down by the barn," Grandfather said. "When Nat ran, he gave her a signal. They worked it out between them as soon as she got here. He took his hat off and practically waved it—and she could see that. If you'd been paying attention, you'd have noticed it, but I suppose you were still counting votes from last fall's election."

"All right," the sheriff said. "I'll

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hand it to you. You figured it out. But the whole thing is still your fault, and don't you forget it. Statistics, phooey!"

And there you have it. Grandfather says if people have murder in them, they don't need any prompting or predicting. The sheriff says there wouldn't have been any murder if Grandfather hadn't started spouting statistics out of that almanac. And as for the bet on the horse, I'll have to let you decide where that came in.

Grandfather wasn't quite finished with Sheriff Pilkins. "Lots of people overlook little things," he said. "So maybe it's natural that you wouldn't notice a triangle with a woman and an old husband and a younger man. And maybe it's natural that you'd forget that a tractor motor running doesn't necessarily guarantee that someone is there keeping it company. But you are the only lawman in these fifty states who ever got a murder case all ready for trial and overlooked the fact *that the only eyewitness couldn't see!*"

That was Grandfather having the last word.

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BEST MYSTERIES OF THE MONTH

recommended by ANTHONY BOUCHER

Georges Simenon may well be the most controversial among the recognized Great Names of the detective story; and one can understand how readers may find some of his novels tenuous and oversubtle after his terse, strong short stories and novelets in EQMM. But VERSUS INSPECTOR MAIGRET (Crime Club, $3.50) is not only an unusually generous volume (two full-length Maigret investigations); it's a fine firm one that should convert the most stubborn disbeliever, demonstrating that Simenon can write an admirably plotted detective novel without losing any of his psychological finesse or highly individual flavor.

★★★★ **DEAD MEN DON'T SKI, *by Patricia Moyes*** (Rinehart, $2.95)
English debut in the great formal tradition: modern in liveliness and humor, but with all the elaborate (and how welcome!) apparatus of alibis, timetables, deduction and reconstruction.

★★★★ **THE DEAD BEAT, *by Robert Bloch*** (Simon & Schuster, $2.95)
Another sub-zero chiller (remember PSYCHO?) with the grim spectacle of a psychopathic personality invading suburbia and shattering it as he disintegrates.

★★★ **FEAR THE LIGHT, *by E. X. Ferrars*** (Crime Club, $2.95)
Eighteen century letters and modern murder make a trim, taut puzzle in suspense with technique so good as to be unnoticeable.

★★★ **GIDEON'S RISK, *by J. J. Marric*** (Harper, $2.95)
Gideon of Scotland Yard battles criminal audacity and official stupidity in a clutch of simultaneous cases, all engrossing.

★★★ **THE YELLOW BRICK ROAD, *by Elizabeth Cadell*** (Morrow, $3.50)
A deft light novelist in one of her too infrequent mysteries—delightful suspense-romance for the summer hammock.

CRIME IN GOOD COMPANY, edited by Michael Gilbert for the Crime Writers' Association of England (The Writer, $3.95), contains essays on all aspects of crime and crime-writing by 14 creative experts—entertaining, stimulating, and sure to double your understanding and enjoyment of the art of murder.

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The first detective . . . see QUEEN'S QUORUM, *page 3 . . .*

THE HISTORY OF SUSANNA

from the APOCRYPHA

THERE DWELT A MAN IN BABYLON, called Joacim. And he took a wife, whose name was Susanna, the daughter of Chelcias, a very fair woman, and one that feared the Lord. Her parents also were righteous, and taught their daughter according to the law of Moses.

Now Joacim was a great, rich man, and had a fair garden joining unto his house, and to him resorted the Jews, because he was more honorable than all others.

The same year were appointed two of the ancients of the people to be judges, such as the Lord spake of, that wickedness came from Babylon from ancient judges, who seemed to govern the people. These kept much at Joacim's house; and all that had any suits in law came unto them.

Now, when the people departed away at noon, Susanna went into her husband's garden to walk. And the two elders saw her going in every day and walking, so that their lust was inflamed toward her. And they perverted their own mind, and turned away their eyes, that they might not look unto heaven, nor remember just judgments. And albeit they both were wounded with her love; yet durst not one show another his grief. For they were ashamed to declare their lust, that they desired to have to do with her. Yet they watched diligently from day to day to see her.

And the one said to the other: "Let us now go home, for it is dinner time."

So when they were gone out, they parted the one from the other, and, turning back again, they came to the same place, and, after they had asked one another the cause, they acknowledged their lust; then appointed they a time both together when they might find her alone.

And it fell out as they watched a fit time, she went in as before, with two maids only, and she was desirous to wash herself in the garden, for it was hot. And there was nobody there save the two elders that had hid themselves, and watched her.

Then she said to her maids: "Bring me oil and washing-balls, and shut the garden doors, that I may wash me." And they did as she bade them, and shut the garden doors, and went out themselves at privy doors to fetch the things that she had commanded them; but they saw not the elders, because they were hid.

Now, when the maids were gone forth, the two elders rose up, and ran unto her, saying: "Behold the garden doors are shut, that no man can see

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is, and we are in love with thee; herefore consent unto us, and lie vith us. If thou wilt not, we will bear vitness against thee, that a young nan was with thee, and therefore hou didst send away thy maids from hee."

Then Susanna sighed, and said: "I im straitened on every side; for if I lo this thing, it is death unto me, and f I do it not, I cannot escape your ands. It is better for me to fall into your hands, and not to do it, than to in in the sight of the Lord."

With that Susanna cried with a oud voice; and the two elders cried out against her.

Then ran the one and opened the garden door.

So when the servants of the house heard the cry in the garden, they rushed in at a privy door, to see what was done unto her. But when the elders had declared their matter, the servants were greatly ashamed, for there never was such a report made of Susanna.

And it came to pass the next day, when the people were assembled to her husband Joacim, the two elders came also full of mischievous imagination against Susanna to put her to death. and said before the people: 'Send for Susanna, the daughter of Chelcias, Joacim's wife." And so they sent.

So she came with her father and mother, her children, and all her kindred.

Now Susanna was a very delicate woman, and beauteous to behold. And these wicked men commanded to uncover her face (for she was covered) that they might be filled with her beauty. Therefore her friends, and all that saw her, wept.

Then the two elders stood up in the midst of the people, and laid their hands upon her head. And she, weeping, looked up towards heaven, for her heart trusted in the Lord.

And the elders said: "As we walked in the garden alone, this woman came in with two maids, and shut the garden doors, and sent the maids away. Then a young man, who there was hid, came unto her, and lay with her. Then we that stood in a corner of the garden, seeing this wickedness, ran unto them. And when we saw them together, the man we could not hold, for he was stronger than we, and opened the door, and leaped out. But having taken this woman, we asked who the young man was, but she would not tell us. These things do we testify."

Then the assembly believed them, as those that were the elders and judges of the people; so they condemned her to death.

Then Susanna cried out with a loud voice, and said: "O everlasting God, that knowest the secrets, and knowest all things before they be; thou knowest that they have borne false witness against me, and, behold, I must die; whereas I never did such things as these men have maliciously invented against me."

And the Lord heard her voice.

Therefore when she was led to be

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put to death, the Lord raised up the holy spirit of a young youth, whose name was Daniel, who cried with a loud voice: "I am clear from the blood of this woman!"

Then all the people turned them towards him, and said: "What mean these words that thou hast spoken?"

So he, standing in the midst of them, said: "Are ye such fools, ye sons of Israel, that, without examination or knowledge of the truth, ye have condemned a daughter of Israel? Return again to the place of judgment, for they have borne false witness against her."

Wherefore all the people turned again in haste, and the elders said unto him: "Come, sit down among us, and show it us, seeing God hath given thee the honor of an elder."

Then said Daniel unto them: "Put these two aside one far from another, and I will examine them."

So when they were put asunder one from another, he called one of them, and said unto him: "O thou that art waxen old in wickedness, now thy sins, which thou hast committed aforetime, are come to light. For thou hast pronounced false judgment, and hast condemned the innocent, and hast let the guilty go free, albeit the Lord saith: 'The innocent and righteous shalt thou not slay.' Now, then, if thou hast seen her, tell me, under what tree sawest thou them companying together?" Who answered: "Under a mastick-tree."

And Daniel said: "Very well; thou hast lied against thine own head, for even now the angel of God hath received the sentence of God to cut thee in two."

So he put him aside, and commanded to bring the other, and said unto him: "O thou seed of Chanaan, and not of Juda, beauty hath deceived thee, and lust hath perverted thine heart. Thus have ye dealt with the daughters of Israel, and they for fear companied with you; but the daughter of Juda would not abide your wickedness. Now therefore tell me, under what tree didst thou take them companying together?" Who answered: "Under a holm-tree."

Then said Daniel unto him: "Well, thou hast also lied against thine own head, for the angel of God waiteth with the sword to cut thee in two, that he may destroy you."

With that all the assembly cried out with a loud voice, and praised God, who saveth them that trust in him. And they arose against the two elders (for Daniel had convicted them of false witness by their own mouth), and according to the law of Moses, they did unto them in such sort as they maliciously intended to do to their neighbor: and they put them to death. Thus the innocent blood was saved the same day.

Therefore Chelcias and his wife praised God for their daughter Susanna, with Joacim her husband, and all the kindred, because there was no dishonesty found in her.

From that day forth was Daniel had in great reputation in the sight of the people.

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DEPARTMENT OF "FIRST STORIES"

Our Department of "First Stories" marches on! And consider, if you will, the extraordinary diversity of the seven "first stories" that have appeared in the past seven issues of EQMM—a parody-pastiche of Sherlock Holmes, a tale of a charming rogue in Naples, a fantasy-mystery most adroitly told, a "pure" detective story complete with "gimmick," a treasure hunt in modern Peru, a murder on a golf course—and now, Number 7 in our "First Story" Parade, a tale of gambling and crooks, of the older generation and the new . . .

The author informs us that while he is a new writer, he does not qualify as a young one. He is 50, looks 40, sometimes feels like 30 (at other times like 60), and is "darn glad I'm not 20—a very messy age." A native New Yorker, he has sold commercial stationery, printing, commercial art, and advertising copy—in addition to holding down a full-time job in an unrelated field! Married, two sons, a card player with the "expensive tendency to overbid," a Civil War buff—you begin to see the man behind the words?

TAILS, YOU LOSE

by A. Y. FRIEDMAN

OLD MR. PIRANYA WAS UNHAPPY. It was not a fiscal unhappiness. Through the door to his right, he could hear the faint moans of the horse-players as they lost the rent money for the third time that month. Behind the door to his left, he knew Papa Metzler was totaling his accounts—in his head, of course. Books could be traced, but who could trace what went on in Papa Metzler's head?

Everything was peaceful. The goons were battling the chumps instead of each other. The reefer pushers were peddling the smokes, not inhaling them. For a change, even the madams from the houses on the south side had no complaints. Yes, all was serene. That was why old Mr. Piranya was unhappy. He remembered the days of his youth.

He remembered a young Mr. Piranya, fresh out of college, all his useless knowledge ready to be discarded and all the world to conquer. Gurry Joe—The Colonel—Knuckles—Swifty Meg—they were the boys and girls to have for playmates. Turn your back on them and the next thing you knew, you were playing the lead in a slow

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procession. And where were they now? Gone. All gone. And with them old Mr. Piranya's youth. . .

The door to the horse-room opened and young Tony Tisso came in, his shoe-shine box slung over his shoulder. Time for old Mr. Piranya's daily shine.

The boy applied the blacking with firm strokes after first folding the trouser cuff out of the way, as old Mr. Piranya had shown him. He worked deftly. He knew his trade and showed it.

Old Mr. Piranya turned away from his roll-top desk, tilted back against the worn leather of his old-fashioned swivel chair, and watched Tony. Here was a case in point.

Young. Sturdy. Decently illiterate and with a typical background. Oldest of eleven children, and never enough to fill one belly let alone eleven, and what did Tony propose to do about it? He covered a route with a shoe-shine box trying to earn what his father couldn't. To *earn* it! Condemned to the life of a law-abiding citizen before he was even old enough to realize it.

Young Tony tapped old Mr. Piranya's shoe to signify he was finished. He replaced the polish, brushes, and buffing cloth in the box, fitting them neatly in place, then rose to his feet.

Old Mr. Piranya produced a quarter. He held it poised on his thumb and forefinger. "You call it," he said. "Double or nothing."

Young Tony said, "I ain't been doin' so good on tails. Heads."

Old Mr. Piranya flipped the coin in the air. It spun, glinting in the light from the shaded electric bulb set high in the ceiling, and landed on the desk. Old Mr. Piranya covered it quickly to prevent it rolling off the edge. Young Tony craned forward to see, as the old man uncovered the coin.

"Tails," Mr. Piranya said. "I'm afraid you lose again."

Old Mr. Piranya watched him through the door before turning back to his desk. He picked up the coin and spun it in the air again. Tails. Nine consecutive times it came down tails before a head showed on the tenth spin. Old Mr. Piranya sighed. Only nine times. What a terrible thing it was to get old! Now, even his dexterity was gone. He pressed the buzzer for the Beast.

The Beast—his real name was Benny something or other—was a classic example of glandular maladjustment. A giant's head and hands and feet set askew on a massive frame, which still wasn't big enough to match.

For a time the strong man had managed a living of sorts as a wrestler—one of the clowns who burlesque and degrade an ancient form of mayhem. That was where he had been named The Beast and taught to grimace like one. But it hadn't lasted very long, because truly, he was a gentle soul with the

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gentleness of the strong. And now he worked for Mr. Piranya in any capacity, for the old man was the only one who never called him the Beast.

Old Mr. Piranya said, "Please tell our friends out front to have their shoes shined."

"Shoes shined again?" Benny repeated. "They're horse-players. They're lookin' to raise a little scratch, not shines."

"Tell Withers to credit them with the usual twenty-five cents each, against their next wagers. And Benjamin, as you said, they are horse-players; this time, check to see if they still have shoes."

Old Mr. Piranya took a book from a pigeonhole in the desk. It was one of a series featuring a tough private eye and his gaudy adventures with and among the fair sex. Old Mr. Piranya was reading his way through the entire series; he liked them because they were so delightfully remote from reality.

Benny returned. "Okay, they're all gettin' shines. Man wants to see you. Name of Grebbin. Talks big."

"Grebbin?" Mr. Piranya put the book away. "Grebbin? I don't recognize the name. You may tell him to come in."

The man who entered sat down on the chair alongside the desk and carefully hitched up his trousers to avoid bagging the knees. He was not a beast. He was an ape—a barbered, pomaded, tailored in black and white-on-white ape.

"So you're Mr. Piranya," he said.

"I have been for some time."

"You're an old man."

"A comparative term."

"No, I mean really old."

"Now that we've exchanged the amenities," Mr. Piranya said, "what can I do for you?"

"From where I'm sitting," Grebbin said, "nothing. But I can do something for you."

"And that is?"

"I can let you in on an opportunity to keep your ancient nose out of my business."

"What precisely is your business?"

"I'm a gambler—from the right side of the tables. I own them."

"Well," old Mr. Piranya said, "I do hope you don't run an honest game."

"My ethics are not the point," Grebbin said. "I'm opening a new house, right here in your town. Where I come from—upstate—we always heard you're the top man down here. Now I've looked for myself."

"And?"

"No antique partners need apply."

Old Mr. Piranya managed to look remarkably like an old snapping turtle who had retired and was filling in his time, waiting for his social security checks.

"Age," he said, "is an ideal which few in our hazardous professions are fortunate enough to achieve."

Grebbin rose to his feet. "Listen

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carefully, old man," he said. "I don't scare easy and I don't run. You had your day, now it's over." He turned to leave but paused. "If you're thinking of sending that monster of yours after me, don't. I'd only send it back in a crate, with its lopsided head under its arm."

"My poor Benjamin," Mr. Piranya murmured after the departing Grebbin.

He produced a ledger with an alphabetical index and leafed through the pages. "Grebbin," he read aloud, "Big Sam Grebbin. Gambling, arson, at least two murder raps, and he's still wet behind the ears."

He put the ledger away and reached for the book he had been reading. "We had our day," old Mr. Piranya mused, "and quite a day it was. I wonder if it's really over."

Big Sam Grebbin knew all about getting everything wholesale. But this wasn't quite enough. What he demanded was the wholesale price less the customary discount for cash —which he had no intention of paying, anyway.

He was clever enough to leave the décor of his new establishment in the hands of a young interior decorator who owed him a favor plus a considerable sum of money. His own taste ran toward faceless moderne—with an 'e'.

The young decorator, under the naive misapprehension that he was cancelling a part of his debt, did an excellent job. Grebbin spurred him on. It is not extravagant to order the best when you have no intention of paying for it. Besides, it was the decorator who signed all the orders.

In the kitchen, matters were different. Food, unfortunately, has a nasty, expensive habit of spoiling. Try as he would, Grebbin could think of no way to keep perishables from expiring. And the suppliers simply refused to cooperate. They always demanded payment for the previous delivery before making the next one.

Not that he hadn't managed to effect a little saving where it wouldn't show. In all Grebbin establishments the chefs were instructed that food, unlike Gaul, was divided in two parts: the fresh, to be served in the dining area where it would be noticed, and the leftovers to be served at the gaming tables. From personal observation, Grebbin knew that a gambler on a streak—it didn't matter whether winning or losing—was in no fit condition to differentiate between broiled steak or broiled sawdust.

However, it was with the man from the little candy store around the corner that Grebbin really distinguished himself.

During the time Grebbin was building his haven for restless money, the candy store had welcomed a new owner. The store was the type often referred to as the poor man's

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department store: a little candy, a soda fountain, a fly-specked line of school supplies, cigarettes and magazines, a small array of misbegotten merchandise—and a pair of fallen arches for its proprietor. In exchange for a twenty-hour day, the store offered slow starvation.

The man came to see Grebbin and waited patiently to be interviewed. Like his store he was small and grubby. The new gambler in town finally permitted himself to notice the little man while seated on the upturned keg which served as Grebbin's supervising station.

The candy store, among its hodge-podge, carried a supply of playing cards. If Mr. Grebbin could, or would, extend some sort of guarantee, the little man would purchase any additional stock of playing cards that Mr. Grebbin might require for his tables. Naturally, in view of the large quantity involved, the unit profit would be reduced and the store hours suited to Mr. Grebbin's convenience. However, all this depended on Mr. Grebbin, since the original transaction on the part of the candy store owner would have to be made on a credit basis. Was Mr. Grebbin interested?

Mr. Grebbin was definitely interested. Playing cards represented a considerable investment. And here, out of nowhere, was a free-for-nothing supply—until the chump's creditors caught up with him. Yes, indeed, Mr. Grebbin was interested and he sealed the agreement with a hearty handshake, even pattting the little man on the back in the traditional gesture common to friendship and to an assassin seeking a likely spot for his dagger.

As always, when the path to any goal seems to stretch on forever, the end came suddenly. The last carpenter drove his last nail. The last painter dribbled the last drop of paint onto the window panes. The last van delivered its final load, and Grebbin was free at last to attend to the really important details.

The electronics expert recommended by the syndicate at the state capital appeared on the scene. He was Ivy League and looked it; he was young, soft-spoken, and slight, with a calm, almost diffident manner. But Grebbin wasn't fooled: this was one man who had to be paid.

The mazes beneath the roulette tables, with their ingenious magnetic controls, were tuned to hair-line accuracy. The mechanical bandits, masquerading as slot machines, had their cogs set to pay off the limit—for the house. Grebbin didn't believe in chance; that was for gamblers—on the wrong side of the tables. The proper people at the proper levels were seen and arrangements made for regular weekly donations—in small bills.

Finally, the stick-men, dealers, guards, and waiters were drilled in their parts, until they responded like Pavlov's dogs.

All was ready for the big take.

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The attendance and play, the first evening, were enough to make even a Grebbin happy. He circulated through the crowd watching all the nice, crisp money and listening to the slot machines whirr and clank. In honor of the occasion, and in faithful emulation of the lesser movie epics, he had donned a tuxedo. Now he resembled an affable ape disguised as a penguin.

When play was over, and the last true believer in the god of luck was gone, Grebbin retired to his cubicle to count the receipts. This was a chore he always performed personally and alone. Where money was concerned, Grebbin trusted only Grebbin. He double-checked all the entries before putting down the total.

The net loss for the evening was $3,075.

From past experience he knew that it was possible for the house to sustain an occasional loss—possible if not probable. In the end the house percentages always paid off. Grebbin was annoyed but not alarmed.

The next night the loss was $2,620.

Twice in a row. Very unusual, to say the least, but still no cause for serious concern. However, Grebbin decided, he would pay closer attention. He took to peering over shoulders.

The loss rose to $3,812.

By the end of the week Grebbin was stalking from roulette table to card table and back and his affability had degenerated into grimness. He had developed a tic which caused his head to jerk and his eyes to roll from side to side as if they were trying to see through the back of his own skull. He tried to spot repeaters, but couldn't find any. He saw nothing but the usual con men, crooks, and hopefuls.

The losses for the week totaled $23,794.

In the middle of the third week he fired his entire crew and imported a new one. At the same time he arranged with an out-of-town detective agency to send in a half dozen of their best operatives. They were instructed to mingle with the customers and file daily reports with Grebbin. None of the employees was to be apprised of the detectives' presence. The result was not a complete failure: two of the operatives contracted the fever and managed to drop a half-year's pay between them.

The net losses, however, continued to march—with the impersonal sweep of waves on a beach demolishing a child's sand castle.

By the end of the second month Grebbin knew he was through. All the profits from a lifetime devoted to cheating—all the petty swindles, all the chicanery and scheming—everything was gone. All he had left now was a problem.

He had to get out from under—and fast—before the proper people at the proper levels, who had not been receiving their donations in

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small bills, got together and personally arranged his farewell party. Also, he needed a new stake. There was only one man who could help him—if he would.

Mr. Piranya was at his desk, reading another book of the private eye series, when Grebbin entered. So far as Grebbin could see, the old man might never have left it. The single shaded bulb showed the same roll-top desk. The Beast sat warily in a corner. The same horse-players moaned about the rent money as they prepared to stake it again on the next race. Old Mr. Piranya watched Grebbin sit down and unconsciously hitch up a pair of baggy trousers. Grebbin's appearance had changed: he looked seedy.

Grebbin said, "I've decided to go back upstate."

"A wise decision," old Mr. Piranya said.

"I'm looking for a buyer," Grebbin said.

"Do you have anything to sell?" old Mr. Piranya asked.

"My house. As she goes. Tables. Furnishings. Good will and all."

Mr. Piranya drew a sheet of paper out of a desk drawer and studied it. All Grebbin could distinguish were rows of figures neatly arranged in columns.

"A very interesting equation," old Mr. Piranya said. "What value do you assign to your own bad debts?"

"I need money," Grebbin said. "Judging from these," old Mr. Piranya said, "so do your creditors."

"I need money," Grebbin repeated. Then his words tumbled over each other. "I got to get out of here. You'll be rid of me. I'll never bother you again. I swear to that. But I need a stake."

"Mr. Grebbin," old Mr. Piranya said, "I'm quite aware of your situation and your need for haste. And much to your surprise, as well as my own, I shall give you some money. I do owe you that much."

Grebbin slumped in his seat with relief, then sat bolt upright again. "You owe *me*? How come? Why do you owe *me*?"

"Art," old Mr. Piranya said, "appears in many forms and guises." He produced a deck of playing cards. Grebbin watched him slit the revenue stamp which served as a seal. "We honor the men who produce a masterpiece—a painting, a symphony, a statue. These are the accepted media and we recognize them. But what of the artists who work anonymously?"

He shuffled the cards, riffling them again and again with his thin fingers, and finally placed them face down on the desk. "Queen of spades," he said, and turned the top card over. "Four of clubs. Nine of clubs. Ace of diamonds." He called each card accurately before the turn.

"Readers, huh? Let me see one." Grebbin examined the card carefully, holding it up to the light and

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peering along the edge. "Pretty good job. I can't spot it. Now, about the money."

"All in good time. At present, I should like you to meet a young protegée of mine who is going to manage your establishment for me." Old Mr. Piranya pressed a buzzer.

The little man from the candy store walked in.

"The cards," Grebbin said. "*You* sold me the marked cards." His voice was calm, almost placid, and yet the menace was more implicit than if he had ranted.

"I would hardly say sold." Old Mr. Piranya smiled. "It would be more correct to say presented."

"The tables. The slots."

Old Mr. Piranya watched him brightly, looking like a wrinkled child witnessing a wild animal act at the circus. "Gratitude is a rare quality in this imperfect world." He produced a large photograph of a young man in a cap and gown. It was the electronics expert. "Bright lad, Peter. Wasted his time, rejuvenating old TV tubes and selling them for new, before I financed him through four years at M.I.T. He's repaid me, since."

"The syndicate won't like it, old man. You shouldn't have done it." Grebbin's voice still contained the hidden menace.

"The syndicate will take Peter's word that the machines were rigged your way. He's the best electronics man in the state."

The tension grew.

It was old Mr. Piranya who broke it. "No, Benjamin," he said, "you may not squeeze him, not even once. Treat Mr. Grebbin tenderly. He's had a trying time of it, recently."

Grebbin felt himself lifted bodily from his seat. The Beast could be amazingly agile for a man his size. Grebbin struggled to twist free, trying to get his arms loose. Benny held him without visible effort.

"Mr. Grebbin is leaving us," old Mr. Piranya went on. "You may escort him through the door. Withers has an envelope for him. All my friends in our neighboring states responded to the call by their old mentor to play Mr. Grebbin's little games for me—all in the name of friendship—plus fifty per cent of the take for the old man."

Grebbin, in Benny's tender clasp, was propelled out. The Beast left with him.

Old Mr. Piranya turned back to his book, but the door opened again. It was young Tony Tisso with his shoe-shine box. "They was layin' bets on how many times he bounces before he hits the street."

"Not many, I'm afraid," old Mr. Piranya said. "Mr. Grebbin is not in an elastic mood."

When the shine was finished, Mr. Piranya produced the usual quarter.

"Heads," said young Tony.

The coin spun.

"Tails," old Mr. Piranya announced. "You lose again."

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Tony turned to leave but paused at the door. "Mr. Piranya, I'm kinda extra busy today—so I already gave them creeps their shines. Okay with you, Mr. Piranya?" And he left.

Old Mr. Piranya stared after him. He looked at the quarter still in his hand. He flipped it. Tails. Again. Tails. Suddenly he chuckled. The sound seemed strange in the room. He chuckled again and it grew into laughter. The horse-players heard the unusual noise and paused in their moans.

So the boy had known all along!

Perhaps there was some hope for the younger generation, after all.

COMING ATTRACTIONS . . .

Watch for *NEW* stories by

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FRANCES & RICHARD LOCKRIDGE
HUGH PENTECOST
RUFUS KING
EDMUND CRISPIN
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MURDER IN THE MISTRAL

by GORDON GASKILL

(*continued from page 52*)

Although it was shortly after midnight the lounge was nearly full. Everybody seemed to be waiting for some dramatic news, and I was a little sorry I couldn't oblige.

Rennie Rolfe came up to me, anxiously, and I told him Bayard had said he could start shooting the film tomorrow—although he might be interrupted now and then if Bayard wanted to talk to somebody.

"How about you?" Rennie asked. "Are you free?"

Bayard made no objections. "Tomorrow," he said, "I shall talk to my own countrymen and will not—for a time—need an interpreter." Then he smiled. "Although, of course, I shall miss your valuable collaboration. However, I trust you will discuss nothing with anyone but me, yes?"

I promised and he went off to bed.

Then Rennie made a speech to everybody. "Of course," he said, "we won't start actual shooting until tomorrow night, when it gets dark. But we'll spend all day tomorrow—and I mean *all* day—with the last rehearsals. I want everybody in full combat gear and that includes guns, grenades, and whatnot."

Somebody murmured, and Rennie said sharply, "I mean *everything*. A rehearsal without any combat load isn't like one with it. You can crawl one way without grenades, but it's harder with them, and I want this to be absolutely—right." He was still afraid to use his favorite word—"realistic."

When he finished, everybody wanted to pump me about the case. I finally got tired of fencing and went to bed. Once there, I lay wide awake, with a head full of things I'd heard during the day, plus a lot of half-formed ideas and scraps of information. A suspicion would swim into my mind like a fish, then a good counter-argument would come in like a bigger fish and swallow it up.

Suddenly I remembered the day I had seen Solly Geldbaum in our wardrobe room. He was holding up a Nazi soldier's uniform, staring at it as if it were the essence of all evil.

I remembered a day when all of us had been at the cave a week or so ago, and how Colonel Evans had stood, hands on hips, gazing in the dimness, certainly remembering his lost men. And the French guide. I remembered Pierre's blunt statement—"He died like a brave man," and Pierre's great hands and his fixed face—a primitive with a code as simple and stark as Moses'.

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The hotel grew quieter as people went to bed. I was almost beginning to feel drowsy when I heard odd footsteps along the corridor. They seemed reluctant, unsure. They came nearer, and I was wide awake again.

The tapping at the door was so faint I hardly heard it. I took a deep breath, snapped on the light, and pulled at the knob.

It was Pierre.

"Monsieur," he began, fumbling, "I—I am finished for the night. I am going home!"

It seemed odd to come to the third floor to say good night, but, remembering his lost son, I cut off a sharp retort. "Come in," I said and shut the door behind him. He fiddled with his black beret, no longer his usual truculent self.

Finally he mumbled, "The *Inspecteur*—he is serious about this —about suspecting me, Pierre, of murder?"

I tried to fathom his shrewd eyes. "Put yourself in his place," I said reasonably. "You had every reason to hate this German—the best reason. You can't prove you went home, as you said last night. Your fingerprints were all over the room where the guns were."

Pierre was thinking, furiously, his bushy eyebrows almost entwined with each other. He sighed, as if making a distasteful decision. "Can you come with me, *monsieur?*"

"Why?" I asked. "And where?"

"That I will show you," he said enigmatically.

Then I remembered what Bayard had said about my not working on my own. I started to argue.

"If it's to do with this murder," I said, "you ought to tell the Inspector."

"No!" he said flatly. "Not him, only you. I want nothing to do with the *Inspecteur.*"

I hesitated, but curiosity won out. "All right. Let me get some clothes on."

The night was very dark. He led me along the short-cut path toward the village. It fell into a deep ravine, then meandered toward the sea. We walked in near-silence.

Once I said, "Can't you tell me what's up? Can't you trust me?"

"If I did not trust you, you would not be here," he snapped.

At the beach we turned left, toward the village, but we didn't go all the way to it. We stopped at a small hut just inland from the beach.

"My château!" Pierre said grimly. He led the way to a small garden in the back, where scraggly vegetables tried to grow in what was almost pure sand. He picked up a battered spade and began to dig. Suddenly the spade hit something hollow; in a moment he unearthed an old wooden crate and opened the lid.

"Voila, monsieur!" he growled. "This is why my fingerprints were there. The devils did not lie."

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The box was half full of hand grenades.

"It is for the fishing," he explained gruffly, embarrassed. "It is simple. Pull out the pin and drop it in the sea among a school of fish. Boom! And I have many fish, with no trouble. I got many during the war, but I used them. So when I saw some more in that room . . ."

I shook my head in exasperation. "Why didn't you say so at once?" I demanded. "Why act so mysterious and let them suspect you of something worse—murder?"

He said stubbornly, "No one could seriously suspect me—or, at least, convict me. Not of murder. But of stealing, yes. And this is stealing, and from the Army of the United States of America. Perhaps a year in prison, perhaps two." He looked at me anxiously. "Do you think something can be done, *monsieur?*"

I started to say I thought we could work it out, but then I remembered something and began laughing. Swiftly I picked up a grenade, pulled the pin, and hurled it out on the sand.

"Monsieur!" Pierre shouted, throwing himself flat on the ground and pulling me with him. I was still laughing.

Seconds ticked by. Nothing happened. Soon it was obvious nothing was *going* to happen.

"They're dummies, Pierre!" I choked. "For the movie. There's no powder in them."

He glared at me in mortification. I think he hated it worse than being accused of murder.

I walked back alone to the hotel, still chuckling over the old man's discomfiture, yet wondering why I had been chosen as his confidant. Surely he realized I would tell Bayard. Somehow, his excuse seemed too easily manufactured.

The hotel was darkened as I came up on the terrace. Like a lot of summer hotels it had many doors, so guests could walk out easily to the beach, and they were rarely if ever locked, day or night.

As I crossed the dark lobby a voice said suddenly, *"Monsieur!"*

I whirled around, startled. Auguste Roquin rose slowly from a chair in the corner, and came toward me.

"I saw you go out," he said in his deep voice. "I waited until you came back. There is something I think you should know."

I was bewildered by his urgency.

"About a key, *monsieur,*" he said slowly. "Tonight Monsieur Geldbaum took his key from the hook and went to his room. Then he came down again and said somehow the key did not function. I let him in with my passkey." He stopped, hesitating.

"Yes?" I prompted.

"Later," he went on, "I looked at his key. You know they are not numbered, as in big hotels. This

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was not his key *monsieur!* It was the key to the German's room!"

I stared, puzzled. "But how did it get on Geldbaum's hook?"

"I do not know," he said simply. "I did not ask him."

I thought this one over and decided I'd done enough sleuthing on my own. I advised him to keep the key, to say nothing to Geldbaum, and to tell everything to Bayard in the morning.

I went upstairs with my head buzzing.

In the morning Rennie Rolfe was so impatient to get started that he barely let us finish breakfast. He looked apprehensive when Inspector Bayard showed up bright and early, as if afraid that he would stop work somehow.

Bayard sensed it and grinned. He asked me to explain that he merely needed a few minutes at the cave to fire a practice shot with a .45 inside. Johnny Shaw got a pistol and a single live round of ammunition.

Then I told the Inspector about Pierre and his dummy hand grenades. He laughed, as I had. "Officially," he said, "I know nothing about it. If they are returned . . ." Then he was silent for a moment, a wary look in his eyes. "But perhaps the old fisherman is smarter than we think. We'll keep an eye on him for a while."

Also, I told him what Auguste Roquin had said of the key mix-up.

"Yes," he nodded. "He has also told me. A strange thing. But perhaps there are many strange things about Monsieur Roquin."

I looked at him inquiringly, but just then Rennie Rolfe shouted, "Let's go!"

We trooped out of the hotel onto the beach—almost everybody but Ninon. Rennie had forbidden her to come along. She didn't appear in any outdoor shots.

"And if you're there, *chèrie,*" he had said gaily, "our hero won't be paying attention to anything else."

Our Juliet pouted, but seemed pleased by the compliment. She blew a kiss to David Douglas as he plodded away, looking very soldierly indeed in his combat gear. In fact, everybody looked pretty soldierly. Even Rennie and the cameramen and the electricians had on some kind of military-looking clothes. "Puts them in the mood," Rennie had said.

I found myself walking beside Colonel Evans, both of us outfitted in full combat rig.

He grinned. "Better than my last time here," he said. "Nobody to shoot at you this time. I feel a little ridiculous, though, wearing this get-up. For the cast, yes. But for the others . . ."

"That's Rennie," I said. "And, ridiculous or not, it seems to pay off in Oscars."

Before we reached the cave, Bayard stopped the column and had us stretch out at regular intervals.

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Then he sent Johnny Shaw up to the cave itself, with instructions to go all the way in and fire toward the sea.

I was about halfway along the line of men and heard a fairly smart crack as the pistol went off. But farther back it had been pretty faint. And with a mistral howling, it was clear the sound wouldn't have been noticed, even quite near the cave, which muffled the report.

Bayard sighed and said Rennie could go ahead now. Then he turned and walked back to the hotel.

Rennie plunged into the routine like a fish getting back into water and began setting up shop just outside the cave entrance, where the action began. Actually, of course, it began aboard the submarine when the Rangers took to their rubber boats. Rennie had blandly asked the Navy to lend him the original World War II sub. But this was too much for the admirals—especially since it was an Army film. So the submarine sequences would have to be shot back home later.

They started rehearsing. Time after time Rennie had the Rangers paddle in toward the cave. Evans helped him figure out exactly who got out first, and where and when. Rennie kept shifting the cameras around until he got just the angles and composition he wanted. Not many people in Hollywood can equal him at this kind of thing and there's nobody better.

For the moment, there wasn't much for me to do. True, I knew all the files, but the colonel had actually been here. I wandered into the cave itself, wondering what it had looked like that grim night ten years ago.

Just inside the entrance a smooth, flat rock made a natural bench. Here, I thought, Romeo and Juliet probably sat. Looking closer, in the still-damp sand, I saw four sodden, split cigarette ends, two with lipstick traces. So that part of their story checked. If they had not been driven out by the "dripping and dropping" from the cave roof . . .

I looked up at the roof—and stared. It was absolutely smooth, as if human hands had carved it flat. And absolutely dry, with no seepage at all.

There was no debris to fall! Yet they had both been positive of it.

Then I noticed the black pebbles lying near the cigarette ends. Suddenly the stones seemed out of place in this expanse of water-smoothed sand. Why only a few of them and why on top of the sand—as if only recently fallen? Surely they could not come from the cave roof.

My heart beat faster. I walked back deeper into the cavern, to the big rocks where—as Bayard had theorized—the killer had hidden, waiting for his victim. And I saw exactly the same kind of small black pebbles here, and only here, carried up by some old storm.

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I felt a prickling of my skin. It had not been Hetzen's smashed body inside the cave while the young lovers smoked; it had been the killer himself! I tried to put myself inside his—her—brain. Everything seemed ready; he had written his note, ostensibly from Odette, to lure Hetzen to the cave at midnight. It was nearly time . . . and suddenly, unexpectedly, imperiling all his plans, in had strolled Douglas and Ninon.

I could imagine the killer's mounting panic, his worldless curses as the precious moments passed and the unsuspecting lovers calmly lit cigarettes and talked. At any moment the major might come —only to leave if he saw two other people there. Or, if not, murder could not be done with those two on hand.

Desperately, the killer tried to think of something to drive them away without making them suspicious. A noise might scare them—but Douglas might not scare easily. So, as a last resort, he began throwing pebbles near them, arching them high so they seemed to fall from the roof. Absorbed in each other, they might not wonder too much, and in the darkness they could not see the roof, and many caves *do* have loose debris on their roofs.

It had worked. Annoyed by the "dripping and dropping," they had left without investigating.

It seemed incredible, almost ludicrous, that a cool and scheming killer had been reduced to mere pebbles—but suddenly I realized I could almost prove it.

Romeo and Juliet could tell whether the "droppings" had fallen all the time they were in the cave or had started only after they'd been there a while. If the second, I was right.

Excited and proud of myself, I walked quickly out to the beach to ask Douglas about it. But he was busy with Rennie and I hated to interrupt. Besides, Juliet, back at the hotel, could confirm it, and, besides, I ought to inform Bayard at once. I decided Rennie wouldn't miss me for a few minutes, and set off, half running, toward the hotel.

Bayard was not in the lobby, so I walked to the reception desk to ask Auguste Roquin where he was. Then I saw something had happened to the hotel owner. He was no longer the impassive, hostile man he had been. His white face looked as if somehow it had fallen to pieces; his hands trembled; he barely managed to get out words to tell me the Inspector was in his own room.

Bayard answered my knock. "Look," I began, almost panting; "we've been looking for a break and I—"

He interrupted me, himself excited. "Yes! I think I have found it—a half liter of milk!"

I was so surprised I forgot my pebbles, and the Inspector was so

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absorbed in his own discovery that he failed to notice my excitement or to wonder why I'd come back. "It happened like this . . ." he began.

Auguste Roquin had said that in order to avoid meeting the German and to give himself time to determine his "attitude" toward him, he had eaten dinner in his own room and had stayed there all night.

But Roquin had chronic stomach trouble, and a maid had standing orders to leave a Thermos bottle of warm milk in his room every night at 10 P.M. Dutifully, the night of the murder, she had brought it, rapped, got no answer, let herself in with a passkey, and left the milk on the bedside table. The room had been empty.

This much Bayard's men had wrung from the reluctant maid. From the contrite village constables they had learned even more. It seems at war's end Roquin had very narrowly missed being tried as a collaborator with the Germans. He had grown rich during the German occupation, not only from the generous requisition rental on his hotel, but also from a private black market he ran, selling German supplies to his own fellow islanders at fantastic prices. He had escaped trial only because there was no real evidence and because he was rich.

I could imagine Bayard's relentless, contemptuous tones saying, "Only the Germans knew exactly what you did and they were quickly taken off as prisoners. You were fortunate, Monsieur Roquin—until two days ago. Then you learned, to your horror, that the German major was returning. The major could, if he wished, tell exactly what you did. You would be ruined forever—not merely disgraced, with your fortune confiscated, but put in prison. At all costs you had to make sure he would never talk."

Even under this bludgeoning Roquin had held firm, denying everything.

Then Bayard had used a sledge hammer. He accused Roquin of having learned from Odette of the coming Ranger raid ten years ago and of having tipped off "your German colleagues," as Bayard put it with deadly irony—a charge that could still mean death in France.

Roquin had gone to pieces and began to talk.

"He gave me this," Bayard told me, holding out a light-blue piece of paper.

"Another note!" I gaped. It was like the other two, though written in French. This one said: *WATCH YOUR WIFE TONIGHT AT ELEVEN THIRTY AT THE CAVE.* It was unsigned.

"So!" I said, nodding. "He thought Hetzen might try to pick up with Odette where he left off ten years ago."

The Inspector smiled. "Exactly

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what I thought at first. But no. It was not the German he was worried about."

"Then who?" I demanded blankly.

"Your hero," Bayard replied. "Colonel Evans."

As he talked, I decided I had been very blind or very naïve. It was the ancient story of an old man married to a pretty wife in her prime. Still, the island was a small place, and nothing—he thought—had happened until the American colonel came.

"In my heart," Auguste Roquin had said brokenly, "I cannot blame them. He is handsome, only a few years older, and with romantic memories of ten years ago. These things must happen."

Whatever Roquin was, or had been, I felt sorry for any man who had to tell such a story to other men.

I remembered Evans's protective indignation last night, when Bayard had hinted Odette might have been playing both sides. I recalled Odette and Evans walking on the beach . . . shopping in the village . . . strolling to the cliff.

Roquin had finally had a row with his wife, not being able to stand it any longer. She swore nothing serious had happened, that nothing ever would, that she would never see Evans again alone. On her honor.

"Honor!" Roquin had said sadly. "She was like an arrow in a drawn bow, waiting to fly to him!"

Roquin thought a servant, somehow learning of the rendezvous, had written the anonymous note, not daring to tell him to his face. That night he had watched his wife and, sure enough, she had gone stealthily to the cave. He followed her at a distance. At the cave, he said, she had paused only a moment, to call out softly once or twice, then had turned back to the hotel.

He swore there had been no shot. He swore he had seen no one else. Only his wife and, yes, the two young people. They were also moving along the beach toward the cave, but so slowly, stopping so often, that they were no obstacle to the people moving furtively but swiftly on the dark hillside paths.

"And of course," I said, "Roquin said he too came back immediately to the hotel?"

"Yes," Bayard said. A slight frown creased his forehead. "The trouble is, his story has the ring of truth about it. Of course, I must talk to his wife. She is marketing in the village now. I have sent a man to fetch her."

Suddenly I remembered the pebbles and told him my theory. Like me, at first he thought it fantastic that an armed murderer would have to resort to mere pebbles. But he saw the force of my logic.

"At least," he said, "we can confirm this. Mademoiselle Narbonne is sunbathing at the beach. I will

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send for her . . ." He broke off, then gave me a smile. "Why not go to the beach to see her? Certainly the sight is worth a few steps, *n'est ce pas?"*

Somebody once said that only ten women in the world have exactly the right figure for a Bikini bathing suit, and certainly Ninon Narbonne was one of them. She lay on her back, on a big yellow towel, and seemed to be asleep. In the deep said our footsteps made no sound.

Bayard said softly, *"Mademoiselle!"* Her eyes opened quickly, with a slight smile. I decided she hadn't really been asleep at all.

We asked her about the falling debris in the cave and she hesitantly confirmed what I had thought. She claimed the disturbances hadn't begun until they had been in the cave for quite some time.

Bayard stared at the sea. "And did it not seem a little strange to you, *mademoiselle*," he said, a little irritably, "that all of a sudden these —these things began dropping when they had not before?"

"We did not think!" she gasped. "But you are right! What does it mean?"

"Probably," Bayard said slowly, "that the murderer was in the cave all the time you were."

A slim, bronzed hand went to her throat. "But this is horrible!" she shuddered. Wide-eyed, she considered a minute. Then, blushing, she astounded us by asking, "Do —do you think he could have heard what we said to each other?"

Bayard and I walked back to the hotel. "Women!" Bayard snorted, half amused, half disgusted. Then he paused. "Has it occurred to you, *Monsieur* Marsden, that this young couple could be misleading us? Perhaps this is an act."

I had no answer for that.

Odette was waiting for us, accompanied by the policeman who had found her in town. Bayard was polite with her, almost tender, but he pulled no punches. When he told her what her husband had said, he looked at her questioningly.

She flushed. *"Oui!"* she said proudly. "It is true." She paused, then went on, "Yes, we were in love, but that was all—do you understand what I mean? After my husband talked to me, John and I also talked. We agreed there was no hope. For me there can be no divorce, for I am of the Church and I believe its teachings."

Suddenly tears sprang into her eyes. "It was not easy. To be so near each other these last few weeks." She bit her lip. "But this explains why I acted as I did, when I got the note. For of course I thought it was from him."

"The note was in French," Bayard pointed out. "Can he write in French?"

She nodded. "Not good French, of course, but enough so we could talk. Also, he has a book of phrases,

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a dictionary. Sometimes I used to teach him."

The Inspector cut in, "And you can add nothing more about your trip to the cave now? You saw no one else? Not your husband behind you?"

Odette colored. "You see—well, the reason I left the cave so quickly, without waiting, I saw a man on the hillside, very near. I thought at first it was . . . John. Then I saw it was someone trying to hide. So it could not be John. Now, of course, I know it was my husband."

"Not necessarily," Bayard said, watching her intently. "It might have been the murderer."

"Non!" she gasped, but a thoughtful look came into her eyes.

With a quick change of pace, Bayard asked her softly, "Who hates you so much?"

"Hates me?" She stared, "I have no enemies."

Bayard remarked dryly. "Do you think it is a friendly act to send notes to you and your husband, so that both of you would be at or near the cave about the time of the murder and thus be suspected?"

Her face went white. "But who could ever suspect *me* of killing this poor German? Why? I had no reason."

The Inspector looked uncomfortable. "That, *madame,* you know better than anyone else. You understand I speak only theoretically, but perhaps something happened ten years ago that you might not like the major to tell."

The color began to surge back to her cheeks. She said coldly, *"Monsieur,* the people here know all there is to know, and I do not think they scorn me for it."

Bayard plowed ahead doggedly. "Again, *madame,* this is only theory—but there is a chance that someone, ten years ago, told the Germans that the Americans were coming."

For a moment she did not seem to understand. Then fire flashed into her eyes and she stood up. "You dare to think this! Of me, who have done far more for France than most of her men!"

Without warning she leaned forward and slapped him in the face. Hard. Then she whirled and made for the door.

"Madame!" he called, but she neither turned nor answered. She went out, slamming the door.

The Inspector sat back in his chair, rubbing his cheek ruefully, almost with admiration. "I went too far," he said sheepishly. "I must apologize to her."

He shuffled his papers, absently, thoughtfully. "It seems," he sighed, "that our murder story is turning into a love story. Or was it the other way around?" He smiled faintly. "Somehow, I do not think your colonel will be pleased that we have discovered his romantic secrets. Ah, they are sometimes deep, these stiff and proper soldiers!"

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He wanted to send to the cave for Evans at once, but I pointed out that it was almost lunchtime and that everybody would be back within a few minutes anyway.

When the cast returned, the hotel looked like a captured command post. The "Rangers" were falling into their roles with great gusto. Draped with their dummy hand grenades, their pistols-with-blanks, they seemed a very tough bunch of cookies. In spite of the murder they were in high spirits, glad to be working at last.

Rennie Rolfe was a new man. He pounded me on the back. "It's going to be a third Oscar for sure, Tony boy!" he exulted. "And this Douglas—you watch him! "He's got a lot of big lights ahead of him!"

"Maybe," I muttered.

But I was more interested in watching Odette and Colonel Evans. They went to great lengths to stay carefully apart. When their eyes met, by accident, both looked quickly away.

Lunch was hurried. When it was over, Rennie shooed them all back to the location. He was impatient and irritated when I said Colonel Evans would have to stay behind a little while. "Oh, all right!" he fussed. "But keep it short, huh?"

Once again there was something about Evans's unperturbed military manner that made Bayard use assault tactics on him. "And what," he said politely, "did you do with *your* note, Colonel?"

Evans and I stared at him. But then the colonel, flushing, said, "How in blazes did you find out about that?"

At Bayard's request, I filled him in on what Odette and her husband had been forced to tell us. When I finished he was brick-red and almost speechless.

"Yes," Evans said in a strangled voice, "I got a note. It's upstairs."

Bayard sent him to get it. When Evans came down he had recovered some poise.

His note—the fourth—was like the others. It mentioned "something urgent" and told him to be at the cave at eleven thirty. And it was not signed.

"Naturally," Bayard nodded, "under the circumstances, you thought it was from her. I realize you had agreed not to meet again, but I should think that any normal man would have gone anyway."

"All right!" Evans burst out. "*I am* normal and I *did* go—or almost!" He caught the Inspector's angry, reproving look. "I apologize for not telling you the literal truth before," he said, stiff with embarrassment. "I would have, had it not involved—a lady."

Bayard concealed a slight smile at the Edwardian formality. "An excuse," he murmured, "any Frenchman can understand. But go on."

The colonel stood ramrod-straight, as if being reprimanded

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by the Army Chief of Staff. "I was about to go to the cave," he said, "when the German major came to my room, as I have told you. This delayed my leaving. I had to hurry to make up lost time. Ahead of me I saw somebody moving in the darkness. I assumed, of course, it was Madame Roquin. Then I saw it was her husband, instead." He was fire-engine red now. "I decided he had somehow learned about the rendezvous, so I changed my plans. I—"

"Retreated in good order," the Inspector finished, his face expressionless.

Evans stared straight ahead, face muscles twitching. "More or less," he said stiffly. "I went back to my room, and to bed."

Suddenly Evans became very human. "Look!" he said hoarsely. "I know this sounds like a cheap play, but it's not very funny to me! I've thought about that woman for ten years. I thought I was kidding myself, maybe, romanticizing the little French girl who saved my life, and I didn't do anything about it. But when the Army ordered me here and I saw her again—"

He groaned. "And there's nothing to be done! She's married to another man. She doesn't love him, but she won't divorce him. I'm—"

Mercifully, Bayard tried to change the subject. "And that night," he said gently, "you saw no one else, except the man ahead of you—Monsieur Roquin?"

But, once the barriers were down, Evans didn't seem to want to leave things. He said bitterly, "I saw those two young people, Douglas and the French girl, on the beach below us walking along to the hotel. How I envied Douglas! To be able to walk out openly with the girl he loves. Not to have to sneak around corners and meet in caves."

Bayard tried again, "And when you returned to the hotel, Colonel, did anybody see you?"

Evans collected himself. "No, sir. Both in leaving and re-entering, I made very certain nobody saw me. I made a very careful reconnaissance."

The Inspector fiddled with Evans's note, glaring at it as if he could somehow force it to talk. Then he said thoughtfully, "Colonel, you have said you no longer held a grudge against this German for the death of your men. But suppose you had found him that night or that morning ten years ago, would you have felt as—objective about it?"

The colonel looked out the window. "Frankly, I don't know. A man will do a lot of things in hot blood. I was—well, pretty badly hurt, and probably I wasn't thinking too clearly. But there's a chance that—yes, I would have. Especially that SS officer, but probably the major, too."

"But you could have then. They were prisoners—helpless."

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Evans stared at him, then laughed. "You think I could walk into a British POW cage and shoot down two men in cold blood, with the British watching? Even if I wanted to?" He shook his head slowly. "No, but, to tell you the truth, I was wondering how it was going to be to see him again. I was surprised how easy it was."

Bayard studied him, then asked suddenly, "Who do you think killed him, Colonel?"

Steadily Evans said, "Sir, I haven't the faintest idea."

Bayard slammed down his pencil in frustration, then told Evans he could go back to the location at the cave. When he had left, the Inspector paced the floor irritably.

"C'est fantastique!" he growled. "Four notes! And no one says a word to anyone else about them!"

"Not so strange," I said. "Certainly Monsieur Roquin wasn't going to tell the world about a note saying his wife was unfaithful. And she wouldn't breathe a word about a rendezvous with her lover. Nor would the colonel, for the same reason. Nor would the German, even if anybody were speaking to him."

"Clever!" Bayard admitted. "Carefully and clevely planned—and quickly, too. No one but your director knew the German was coming until a few hours before he arrived. Then, to invite the German to his death, cleverly signing it with Odette's initial. Then three more—all to people who might have had good reason to hate this German or fear him—to invite all of them to be near the cave about the same time, to divide the suspicion, to give us suspects—too many suspects!"

He kicked impatiently at the carpet. "And another thing!" he complained. "First, we hear almost nobody left the hotel that night. Now we find almost everybody did—but nobody saw anybody else. It is fantastic, I tell you! First, Pierre—"

"Much, much earlier in the evening," I objected.

"So he says," Bayard snapped. "Then the composer, this Geldbaum."

"On a different path," I pointed out, "and nearsighted."

"Who can know?" Bayard shrugged. "The two young people there on the beach . . ."

"So much in love," I argued, almost enjoying this, "that they couldn't see beyond each other's eyes. They wouldn't have noticed an earthquake—at least, I think not."

He went on doggedly. "Then Madame Roquin, followed by Monsieur Roquin, followed by Colonel Evans, Not to mention the German. Not to mention the murderer himself, whoever it was!"

I admitted it made quite a parade. "But all of them, remember, were taking a good deal of trouble

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not to be seen, and on this island, with all the paths and rocks and bushes, it's easy to avoid being seen. And there was no moon and, with the mistral howling, not many people would go strolling for fun."

"Nevertheless!" Bayard contended angrily. "With such a procession it is incredible that somebody did not see somebody else."

"Well, they did," I pointed out. "You're exaggerating a little. Everybody saw Romeo and Juliet at one time or another—that is, Odette did, her husband did, and the colonel did. And Odette saw somebody on the hill near the cave; she thought it was her husband. Maybe, as you suggest, it was the killer. And the colonel certainly saw Monsieur Roquin in time to retreat."

The Inspector made an irritated gesture. "Motive!" he growled. "Motive! Somehow we haven't found the motive that will be the key to everything. Or else we have too many motives!"

"Speaking of keys," I said, "why do you think the German's key should turn up on Solly Geldbaum's hook?"

Bayard shrugged wearily. "Theories? Yes, plenty! The killer might have wanted to get into the room afterwards and search to see if the German had brought something with him. But what? Documents? And if the killer was indeed the little musician, why keep the key later and risk having it found? Why not throw it in the sea or bury it in the sand? Did the real killer hang the key there in a clumsy effort to make us suspect Geldbaum?"

Bayard shook his head again. "Motive! We have all kinds of motives. First, revenge. Your colonel avenging the death of his men. Pierre avenging the death of his son. The little composer avenging the death of his family in Nazi gas chambers, And, in a way, the use of the cave seems a kind of symbol of revenge, by a mind that has brooded for years." He paused.

"But then," Bayard went on, "there could be fear. Perhaps Madame Roquin's fear that the major might reveal something to disgrace her. Perhaps Monsieur Roquin's fear that he or his wife would be disgraced, or that he would lose his fortune or his freedom or perhaps his head. And if it is true that either of them—or the barman—had warned the Germans of the raid beforehand—."

We wrestled it up and down and came out exactly nowhere.

"Logic!" I said in disgust.

"There is nothing wrong with logic," he retorted. "Only, somewhere our facts are wrong."

I forced myself to picture what had happened that night: dark figures moving silently among the rocks and tangled undergrowth on the side of the hill, toward the cave; a German, fearful and nervous, walking cautiously to his death; a tortured Frenchwoman

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skulking to meet an equally tortured American lover; a heartsick, angry French husband; a dreaming musician listening to the shrieking wind, carrying in his heart the ache of his lost family.

And somewhere, a cool killer, perhaps watching them all, like marionettes on strings.

Up on the hillside, fear and tortured hearts. But down on the open beach, two young lovers, walking up and down, not caring who saw them.

Out in the open, walking up and down . . .

Deep inside my head something stirred. Like the thin, ear-off voice of a lone violin that begins a symphony. Only a single spoken word, a word of only two letters.

"One thing—" I began, out loud. And even before I could go on, other facts joined in. Hardly facts —rather, vague, unformed doubts that had lain deep in my subconscious mind, like dark, unseen things at the bottom of the sea.

Bayard looked at me, puzzled.

"It can't be," I said slowly, my brain racing. "It sounds too crazy. But suppose—"

I started talking, and I talked a long time. When I finished, Bayard was staring at me.

"But it is fantastic, incredible," he whispered. I could almost watch his mind marshaling all the facts, the theories, the suspicions. Then he nodded, as if in a trance. *"Mais c'est possible!"*

His eyes were excited now, bright. Then he said, "But how could it be proved?"

"I think there might be a way," I said thoughtfully. "We could call his wife—his widow—in Hamburg. It's the kind of thing a man might tell his wife."

Bayard stared, then slapped his forehead. "Of course!" he said. He stood up. "Better to call from the police office in the village," he said, "not from the hotel. I will go at once. First to call Paris and let them handle it from there. It may take a long time."

To the cook's horror Rennie Rolfe had ordered dinner for seven. He wanted to start turning the cameras the minute it got dark. He forced everybody to gulp down food as if the hotel were going to blow up in five minutes. I had no appetite and I had to force myself not to look around at other people. I was a writer, not an actor.

"Let's go!" Rennie said impatiently.

I looked questioningly at Bayard and he nodded. As I passed him he said in a low voice. "They will bring a message if the call comes through tonight. I shall wait here."

Half the people on the island were at the location. They had probably never seen a film being made before and they weren't going to miss the chance. Nearly everybody at the hotel was there, too. The gawkers irritated Rennie, but there wasn't much he could do

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about it. He didn't own the island.

Despite all the rehearsing things didn't quite satisfy Rennie. Time and again he'd shoot something, then yelp in disgust, stop everything, and do it over. It took him well over an hour to get the Rangers up from the cave and started along the path toward the radar station. With the lights, it seemed phony, but on the screen it would look all right.

The crowd kept murmuring and laughing, and Rennie was tearing his hair like a true artist. Once he had me make a speech in French insisting that there must be absolute silence. It worked—for a while.

In the reflected light, I could make out Odette, her face serious, absorbed. By her, like a jailer, was her husband. He probably didn't care two hoots about watching movie-making, but he wasn't letting her out of his sight at night, with Evans on the same island.

Ninon Narbonne was watching her hero, lost in admiration. Colonel Evans, in full combat gear, acted as if he'd never heard of a girl named Odette. He stayed close to Rennie, now and then whispering some suggestion about the action.

A group of "Nazi" soldiers, soon to be in action, had clustered around to watch. But, accidentally, they pressed around Solly Geldbaum. He stared at them with his sad eyes, then moved away.

Pierre stood on the fringe of the crowd, remote and impassive, like a gloomy prophet. I wondered what thoughts crowded through his mind as he watched the actor impersonating his lost son.

Suddenly I saw three dark figures moving slowly into the reflected glow of the lights, coming from the direction of the hotel. As they drew nearer I recognized Bayard and his two men. I felt a chill, like an electric current.

The call had come through!

Gradually, very gradually, Bayard drifted over to me. "You were right," he said, lips barely moving. "Congratulations."

I didn't feel proud or pleased; I felt a little sick. "When?" I whispered.

He shrugged. "Now. Why not?"

Maybe Bayard should have waited; or maybe he knew exactly what he was doing. He and his men kept moving very slowly through the crowd, trying to attract no attention.

I found myself drifting with them. I didn't want to, but I had started something and it didn't seem right to hang back now. We came closer, and I thought it was going to be clean and easy.

Then Rennie Rolfe yelled out, angry, "For the love of Mike, who's that moving there? Tony? You ought to know better than—"

That did it. The killer looked around and saw the four of us closing in. He seemed to hesitate a moment, then made up his mind.

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He pulled out a pistol and jumped back. "Get away!" he ordered.

The French didn't have to understand English to know what he meant. It was up to me, and only me, to talk to him.

He was backing up now, with careful steps, his gun ready. Soon he was up against a cleft in the rocks. He could retreat no farther, but nobody could close in on him from the rear, either.

I had forgotten the staring crowd. My mouth was dry with excitement, but I tried to talk in calm tones. "Take it easy," I said to the killer. "There's nothing you can do. And that's a property gun, with blanks."

In the light, his twisted grin was ghastly. "Don't fool yourself, Tony. This one's loaded. Do you think I haven't been expecting something like this? It's my own gun, Tony. Officer's issue, remember?"

"Okay, Colonel, if you say so," I replied mildly. "But you can't kill everybody. You can't get away."

"I know," Evans said unevenly. "But don't press me. I don't want to hurt anybody, but don't press me. I want to handle this my own way. How did you find out, Tony?"

"They called his wife in Hamburg," I said, as conversationally as I could. I didn't want to excite him, not with his finger trembling on the trigger. I sensed, rather than saw, that the French police were covered too.

So far, everyone else had been paralyzed with astonishment. But now Rennie Rolfe gasped, "But why Evans? *Why?*"

I felt worn out, as if my tongue was too tired to move any longer, or my brain to work. But Evans didn't speak and I had to say something.

"There were two murders, Rennie," I said.

"Two?" he gaped.

"Our script was okay," I went on, "except we got the parts reversed. It was really Sergeant Ellsberg who wouldn't talk, and the captain—Colonel Evans—who did. When Odette let them out Evans killed the sergeant to keep his mouth shut."

Evans made some inarticulate sound, staring at me. But he said nothing.

"But the records, the files!" Rennie said.

"The Army accepted Evans's story with no question," I said. "Why shouldn't they? And his feet *were* burned some."

I said to the colonel, "I'll hand it to you. It took guts to burn your own feet so it'd look right." It was a shot in the dark, but it had to be right, and it was.

Evans said hoarsely, "I couldn't stand it. I was out of my mind." Then he peered at me, a sly expression on his face. "I thought I covered up pretty well," he said slowly.

"You did, Colonel," I said. "But, back in my mind, I'd always half

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wondered why you, if your feet were so badly burned, got so far away from the hotel, while the sergeant never got farther than the beach outside. Why didn't he hunt a good shelter from the bombs, too? He knew they were coming soon, as well as you did. Why stay out on the open beach near the hotel? I know now—because you killed him there. You were lucky a bomb tore up his body. Otherwise, you'd have had to do something about it later—hide it, bury it, sink it in the sea."

The .45 seemed to be trembling, and I stopped talking.

"Go ahead!" he ordered. "I don't mind."

It was fantastic, this scene, and I rubbed my hand over my face, as in a dream.

"But none of this meant anything to me until today," I went on. "I never really thought it out and, besides, funny things can happen. I didn't have any suspicion at all—until today. Something you said. One little word."

"What word?" he demanded.

"You said you saw Douglas and Ninon walking *to* the hotel. Everybody else had seen them walking *from* the hotel and *to* the cave. But it took me a long time to make anything out of that, too." I didn't go into details. "Anyway, we found out they'd been in the cave when the killer was, although they didn't know it. And the killer was still there when they left and headed back to the hotel. So when I remembered you said you'd seen them walking to the hotel—well, it meant you were out a lot later than you'd said."..

"I tried not to," he rasped. "I asked him . . ."

"That's what we figured," I said evenly. "That you'd probably gone to his room, instead of the other way around. That maybe you offered him something to keep his mouth shut. Maybe he said yes, maybe no. Anyway, you couldn't take a chance. Even if he agreed, it would mean blackmail the rest of your life. Your whole career would hang on a thread. One word from him and you'd be ruined."

His gun sagged. "There wasn't anything else I could do."

Beside me, I sensed one of the French police moving a stealthy hand toward his pistol, hoping Evans might not notice.

Suddenly some fool of an electrician got an inspiration. He snapped on the big searchlight and aimed it straight at Evans's face, blinding him.

The Colonel made an animal noise and whipped up the pistol. But he fired neither at the light nor at anybody else. He jabbed the muzzle of the .45 in his mouth and pulled the trigger.

It was loaded, all right.

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May we please repeat ourselves for a single paragraph? Once before we wrote: "It has long seemed clear-cut to us that there is a deep and natural affinity between the stuff of poetry and the stuff of mystery stories. Throughout the ages, poets have been peculiarly sensitive to the physiology of mystery—to the smell of evil, to the sound of violence, to the sight of cruelty, to the touch of tragedy, to the taste of murder—and to that sixth sense which detects and diagnoses 'the heartache and the thousand natural shocks that flesh is heir to'."

The roster of American poets whose stories of crime, mystery, and detection have appeared in EQMM is indeed luminous—Edna St. Vincent Millay, Stephen Vincent Benét, Mark Van Doren, Christopher Morley, Joyce Kilmer, Ogden Nash, to mention only a few of the moderns, and among the earlier great, Edgar A. Poe, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, and—yes!—Walt Whitman.

Nor is the list of English poets who have contributed stories to EQMM less luminous—Rudyard Kipling, Robert Louis Stevenson, G. K. Chesterton, A. A. Milne, Lord Dunsany . . .

And now we are privileged to add another well-known American poet to our criminological corner—Muriel Rukeyser, author of THEORY OF FLIGHT, U.S. I, *and* A TURNING WIND. *It has been said of Muriel Rukeyser that she has a "grasp of the essential," that her work reveals "her practice of positive speech." The same is true of her prose, as the story which follows so surely demonstrates: "The Club" is one of the most poetically written and sensitively imagined tales of murder it has been our pleasure to read in a long time . . .*

THE CLUB

by MURIEL RUKEYSER

THAT WAS THE DAY WHEN HE decided what it was he had to do. It was fortunate that he was not a nervous man, for this was Monday, and the wait between Monday and the week-end is too hard for the resolve of nervous people; that is what he thought as he looked down at the pens and pencils, the gold pen and the mottled green one in their groove, and the two mechanical pencils with

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their metallic colors among the red company pencils in their groove on his fancy inkwell. The inkwell was a present from Gracie.

But it was two minutes to three, and he had better put the whole matter aside until four-thirty. At three the time-study man was coming for his appointment. The whole office, all the branches, and the plant itself might be reorganized. At four-thirty, after the time-study man, after Mr. Greenwood, and Miss Brosnac, he would be free to find the place.

And now it was three o'clock. There was his door opening, the shadowless lights of all the fluorescent overheads in the main office were falling through the doorway, the shoulder of the time-study man was darkening the heavy pebbled glass of the door whose surface he loved, and he said. "Good afternoon."

"Good afternoon, Mr. Stainer," said the time-study man.

It was nearer to a quarter of five before he got away. But on this day of April, the blue-green of the McGraw-Hill Building was still brilliant, almost white, with the sunlight. There was beginning to be a strength in the sun.

He got his car out of the garage in the second cellar of Two Hundred West; he was in the tunnel within ten minutes. The roar of enclosed noise was, this time, a happiness to him; he felt that he was living in a trumpet; the exultation and the light were still there as he came to surface on the New Jersey side.

He headed north almost at once. Seven traffic lights, two red, one green, one red, three green. Why should they run that way? he thought in irritation, and realized he had turned several corners. Why should I be counting? he thought.

He looked again at the road map. For none of these roads, none of these towns, were known to him. When the transfer had finally been announced, four months ago in Salt Lake City, he welcomed it; the eager, confirmed man at the high moment of his life. New York! The main office! He and Gracie were ready to leave in three weeks, their train pulled out a month to the day after his notice arrived.

And now here he was, in the gathering darkness, looking at the last lap of the journey as it lay on the map in crude green and yellow and the decisive black.

The road was even better marked in reality than on the map. The traffic circle after Paterson; Butler, and now it was really dark, and hardly any cars. He could use his full headlights. He liked the red dot over the speedometer that showed now, when the headlights were on full. A careful man, I'm a careful man; it gave him pleasure to say that of himself; and my pleasures are all the keener for my care.

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This driving alone was one of the excellent pleasures. During all his office life, of course, people could come in at any time. And much as he wanted to be left alone, much as he disliked associating himself with random people, he was exposed to that always. In a car, by himself, he had freedom; as long as he wanted it that way, the doors opened in one direction only: out.

Butler, and Newfoundland, and then any old road. Better than he had hoped; this dark way up the hill, and it must be over a thousand feet. Before and below him in its shining, the reservoir, its darkness gleaming under a colored moon. With a swift floating movement the moon cleared a flat edge-lit cloud. Time's going, Mr. Stainer thought. It won't be dark. It will be bright and green; the leaves are out, they are bright. I'll kill her here, he thought.

He was walking upstairs and turning the key in the apartment lock at the usual time. He had a usual time, a little later than homecoming in Salt Lake City; but the smells were almost the same as he opened the door. Lamb and potatoes, and he could sort out mint and no, that was the cedar of the floor oil that, was that asparagus?

There was Gracie's smell, flowery and unlike her, a moment before he put his arms lightly around her arms and back, and, mechanically, kissed the flatness of her mouth.

Gracie's mouth was not flat. He knew that when he looked at her; he really knew it, of course. But it was as though he had not looked at her since he came to his decision; for months before that, too. Perhaps for two whole years, if you counted what had happened on Easter Sunday two years ago.

He had understood, that day, the full extent of her refusal. It was a refusal to see how all his suffering derived from her denial, refusal to see his drive for separation which she would not allow, for divorce which she would not allow, for anything to break this life. And now here she was, talking about the trip as if she were going to go.

"Florence is so excited," she was saying. "She went to the consulate and found out a lot . . . all French towns, you know, and the Gaspé . . ."

He made her voice fade out. He could do that at will. And it was because he could make her image fade that he could feel as if he no longer saw her. As for dreams: he had not dreamed about her since before he had married her.

Yes, it was all about sex. Whatever anyone said, that was the whole answer. What other answer was there? He said what she expected him to say. There! it was said, and they were going in to dinner, the last dinner at home.

People could say that money, economics, dominated our lives, that society always had a hand; but take their own case. If things

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had been right between them. Anything. Any one thing. But her flat mouth. When he kissed her these days, it was as if her lips were flatnesses of—not flesh, not meat, more like potato, he thought. His fork went into the little new potato on his plate.

In Salt Lake City he had been able to manage. Even if her mouth was flat, he had—his legs tightened. He was advancing in the company, the automobile business was in a curious position and suddenly he, Paul Stainer, had been able to predict and maneuver and move freely in his business life. A sort of fog-light for the company, in that period. People who talk of economic reasons! With, all the time, his personal life shot to pieces.

He could say that Gracie had been awful when the vice-president came to dinner. Better to stay away from people altogether than have that kind of evening. Better not to identify yourself with any group. He had never been a joiner. However, the vice-president . . . But he got his promotion, didn't he? The raise and the transfer? She had been nervous, weeping and pink-faced, and then weeping and red-faced, in the bedroom, later.

Everything was so bad between them. Abomination, he thought, this curse, nonexistence! He couldn't make her feel it. She never could see that the lack was an active cause. But it worked in him, night after night, day after day.

It wasn't so bad in Salt Lake City. He had been able to manage. First, there was Miss Aydelotte; then there was little Miss Kenmore, who had even added a henna tint to her hair; and then, right up to the day they left, Miss Dietz.

New York was different. Even forgetting how awful Gracie had been the night the president came to dinner. He himself liked only the society of the well-bred, the handsome, the powerful. Gracie was ill at ease with people at that level. He was resigned to all that. But the chances here, the range, the rival excitements in the air; this fierce spring in the vertical stone city, at the nerve-center of the company, a kind of open fighting and open creation. Life stronger than he had ever felt.

In business, that is. The rest of it . . . He could not, he could not: he was overpowered. Gracie, the company, the city. Whatever it was, it came out in the open that night at the hotel. With the neon striking the hotel room red one instant, black and dark the next, red the next. Striking the terrified face of Miss Walters, so moving in its panes (a modern, metropolitan face, he thought, even without its freshness of color and passion, even twisting in fear and disappointment, and that bud of horror, her mouth), striking her face and young breasts and the long fair legs first red then black.

It was all Gracie. While she was

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there, he was done for—as done for with anyone else as he was with her. And no children. No life in them. No life before them . . .

He put his hand out for another slice of lamb. He would have his life; nobody would keep him from it. He could be himself, come into his own powers, whatever they were, that had been kept from him. Some part of himself was out of reach. He would reach it.

"But, Paul," she was saying. "I don't know how I can do this without you. It's been two years since—oh, I suppose—but to be separated—"

Finish your sentence, he was saying to her, although his teeth locked, his voice closed on the words, the little muscles hardened over his jaw. He was not a big man, but when his face darkened with blood, and his muscles rose, he seemed almost tall, almost broad.

Soon they were lying in their bedroom. The last, he thought. And the dim, level affection she was showing was worse for him than nothing at all . . .

Sunday morning was a real spring morning. The chimes woke Gracie; Paul was wide-awake, and started as his wife woke and sat up, all in one movement.

"The picnic!" she said, in her moaning singsong.

"Let's just get out of town," he said, as he shut the apartment door, "and not decide where we're going. Let's go some place we never went before."

From then on it was easy. They were on top of the big hill. Under them, the reservoir, steely, and its cold walls.

It was at that point he had his only bad moment. I will be my only weapon, he thought, looking at his thumbs. She will never again stare her frigid terrible stupid empty frightening fiery vegetable stare, he thought; the brain lies unprotected directly behind the eyes.

But he got hold of himself. That was a satisfaction he was not to have. And when he pushed her into the reservoir, and she went down almost at once, her hair going reluctantly down after, he knew he had been right not to use violence.

He jumped in almost at once and swam about, although he hated this part. And soon he was dripping in the farmhouse parlor, his teeth beginning to chatter, hearing himself say "An ax—" and he almost began to laugh—"there's been an accident."

He went through the next three days as if he were drunk. People were very kind. Florence was a great help at the funeral. And the work of mourning, he discovered, turned into, actually, a kind of mourning. Work was being done on the image of Gracie. More than she had ever faded in life, she faded to whiteness after her death; and quickly; and to a kind of

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benevolence, so that he began to lose his hatred.

But he was attracted to the place.

He went to stay with Florence and her husband after the funeral and they talked very little about the tragic accident. They were glad he had himself so well in hand; they did not protest to the point of annoyance when he left early Sunday afternoon. He would be going back to work the next morning, anyway; he had some things to do.

On the bus he fell asleep. The sleep was a powerful drink to him, he had been thirsty for this for weeks. He woke on the road leading to that hill, he realized the murder for the first time, and he knew he must not go back.

With an effort he stayed in his seat. He felt as if some change were taking place in him. He was learning something, that was all he knew, as the bus drove steadily into the green spring countryside.

He got off in the first town with a railway station. He was surprised to find, in the Men's Room of the restaurant where he went to inspect his clothes and his face, that he looked and felt no different. There was no difference at all. "You're supposed at least to want a drink," he said to his reflection in the square glass above the wash basin. For the sake of form he left by way of the bar, where he drank most of a scotch and soda.

There was not long to wait. He got on the New York train and opened the magazine he had bought on the platform. As the train started and he settled down to his story, he realized that the feeling he had had for months, the sense of things losing substance, fading before his eyes, the sense of unreality and fear amounting to insanity, had disappeared. All apprehension had gone. The pressure on his chest and head, the unease of feeling followed by her look—these too had been abolished. The set of acts had been frightful, yes; but necessary; and the trouble was gone.

The magazine story was in front of him, letter by letter and word for word. It *stayed,* as nothing had stayed before him all this time. He read with concentration and considerable relish. It was not much of a story; but it was a pleasure to him to follow the events and motives of simple people, wearing their habits, behaving in lightness and love, and moving inevitably toward the prescribed ending. It would be a happy one. He turned to the last page of the story. Yes, it was a happy one.

He looked up into the eyes of the passengers on the slow local. The man was watching him with a summary stare; he did not now blink nor avert his attention. The man looked as though he thought he knew Paul; but Paul was certain he had never met this passenger.

Paul often forgot the names, and

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indeed the faces, of guests at cocktail parties or of brief visitors at the office. But this passenger could never have been at the office or at any party the Stainers would have attended. The passenger had the face of, say, a small grocer: dark-stubbled, fleshy, notable only for the eyes, around which were bunched the folds which develop after years of critical appraisal or uncorrected nearsightedness. However, the look which met Paul was not critical; it was as if the passenger were reading something with appraisal and withholding any final opinion; and what he was reading was Paul's face.

As Paul came to this conclusion, he judged also that he did not care for the stare, nor indeed the face which stared. It was a rather ugly, unapproachable, repellent face.

Just at this moment the passenger began a nod of recognition. Paul looked away.

Why did I do that? he thought, with a rush of consternation. Suppose, he went on, with a real taste of panic, suppose this man I cannot place has reason to remember me on this train. He must be some night clerk at a delicatessen, or an elderly newsboy I pass everyday.

And he saw how he might give himself away. However, he thought, there is nothing to give away. He looked back at the face, which by now he hated cordially. But the other passenger was looking out the window at the flats, whose tender green showed over the deep browns and ochres of the earth.

Only in the tunnel, lit by the black-yellow light, just before the train got in, did their looks meet. This time the delicatessen man did nod at him.

Once in the station Paul rushed to the escalator and walked the moving stairs. He could not wait to ride to the top. On the lower level he searched for a restaurant; he was awfully hungry by now; but he did not wish to face the glare of the health bars and the soda fountains. He went on to the Savarin and felt much better after a hot roast beef sandwich and a cup of coffee. He took more cream than he was used to, and drank a pony of brandy after his meal.

Out on the street he paused for the first time. He knew he must not go home until after the office on Monday. He knew that he must buy an overnight bag and some shaving things and a toothbrush—and a couple of mysteries, he supposed—and go to a hotel that he would choose at random. But he must make the random choice count. First he would find a drug store.

He was thinking very clearly. It was almost as if he had been insane for two years, and now was at last sane.

He was startled out of his musing plans by a woman who stood before him, weaving slightly, a

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very tall woman with a thin round face. Her eyes had something of a look he had seen somewhere before. Recently. On the train. Her appraisal was open, and she went farther than the passenger: she said, after a moment, in a breath that carried a strong current of cheap whiskey, "Take it easy, fella."

"Of course." Paul clipped off the syllables and walked away. Damn fool, you damn fool! You needn't have answered at all!

He hurried to the big drug store down Thirty-Fourth Street, bought a zipper bag, and filled it with toilet articles, Pocket Books, and a bottle of eau de cologne whose heraldic stoppr he had admired for a long time. He walked back to the station and straight through, with his executive stride, to the opposite doors. Then he crossed the avenue, got on a downtown bus, and rode to the end of the line.

The nearest hotel was across the little square, over the travel agency. He lay in his small green-gray room, hearing the voices outside. At first he imagined he had scrambled words. They were speaking a language he had never heard a word of, and languages were what he had been keen on in college. He read a mystery novel, shaved carefully and bathed, read another mystery instead of going out to dinner, and fell into an early dreamless sleep.

He woke with heat on his face; the sun, combed through the slats of the venetian blinds. What language could it be? he thought. And then—Gracie. He must see a paper. For the only time, he felt that someone might have been watching the reservoir that Sunday.

At the hotel desk, where steamship tickets were also sold, he asked what language he had heard in the halls. The boy behind the desk was happy to inform him. "Basque," he said, and smiled with his dark mouth.

"Have you got a *Times?*"

The boy sent Paul up the side of the square to a newsstand. Nothing on the front page: a headline about a union row. Nothing on the back page: an attempted suicide by mother of four, illness of a Nobel prizewinner. All the way through, nothing.

Things went well at the office. He had a large morning mail, got it all out of the way, talked to Detroit, and looked at his calendar. The time-study man was due at eleven thirty.

It was not until the time-study man had been talking to him for almost ten minutes that Paul was fully aware of the evil in his face. A week ago he had seen him as a very effective, rather pushing, blond man, with saturnine eyebrows and lines going straight down his cheeks. A statistical mind, he had thought, a man who is himself not much more than a labor-saving device.

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But this week the time-study man, seen clearly, conveyed the most extreme corruption with every feature and every gesture. Or was it simply the manner in which he was regarding Paul, seeming to give a double meaning to everything he said?

Just then the time-study man drew a breath, interrupted what he was explaining about methods in the middle west to mutter to Paul, in an entirely new voice, 'We trust you, you know," and went on with the Terre Haute report.

"What do you mean?" he said like a schoolboy.

"The sort of person you are," said the time-study man.

"How do you—"

"How do you think?" the time-study man answered, inflecting the words curiously. Then he picked up his brief case and his hat, and left.

It had been a remarkably stupid conversation. But for a minute Paul thought the man meant that he knew about what had happened that picnic afternoon. Paul went to the office library and opened a copy of *Fortune*. But he could not have known! Paul smiled at what he was reading: here was an article praising the beauty of design in certain new industrial buildings. (It must have been something about the company that he knew; something evidently flattering to Paul.) The article included photographs of some of the buildings. Handsome they were: long low windowless factories, great round turrets, and the radar tower just built in (no, of course he meant what he seemed to mean) New Jersey.

Yes. The time-man knew. And the only way he could know was by seeing something that had given Paul away.

But what was there? There was not a clue to that day. The map? Destroyed, thrown over the railing of the George Washington Bridge. And what would the map have meant? Plans for a picnic. No. Someone would have had to see the thing itself. He had taken that chance. By this time he was safe. Completely safe.

Paul thought he had better go home. It was lunchtime—an early lunch, well, yes, but just the same.

But at home, on the way back, during the rest of the office day, there was nothing that did not go smoothly.

It was a routine afternoon until just before closing, when the inter-office gadget announced Mr. Dought. For a second Paul could not remember who that was, and then, before he remembered, he jumped, his skin leaped. The time-study man!

"Mr. Stainer," he heard, "I have only come back to be friendly. You seemed nervous this morning; alarmed."

"I'm not alarmed," Paul said.

"Of course not," the answer

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came. "You are not to be. We want you to understand that you can trust us."

In bed that night, Paul began to see.

He took the subway to work the next morning. There, facing him, he saw the one who brought it home to him. Stupid, thick-faced, filthy, he was smiling and rolling his head at Paul as if he had found a long-lost brother. Paul thought the man had the worst face he had ever seen, the most brutal hands; the foulest, most broken shoes.

After two stops, when still no one stood between them to cut off his view, Paul leaned forward and said across the aisle, "Why do you pretend to recognize me?"

The man drew back, hurt. A stricken look passed over the thick features; then a defensive changing expression, and that gave way to the most disfiguring mask of all—jocular, intimate, and in a low defaced way, witty.

"Well," said the thick man, and the bullying creature came through in its full force, "take it easy. We're all in this together, you know."

It would not end. He was pulled into a group, doomed to a herd at last, to a group doom. Tighter, more stable, more demanding than any clan he had ever imagined. And the rasping or weak or timberless voices; the brute masks, stupid and sly and always less human; the knowledge in all their eyes of his fall, his fault, the fact of his unaccepted guilt.

This is the worst, he thought.

But it was not the worst. That was not to come for almost a week more, when, again in the subway, he saw the young white-faced boy, the eyes that looked through the windows at the blackness of subway tunnel and the sudden fever-bright station platforms, the mouth that only occasionally trembled, the feet, one pressed down hard on the laces of the other shoe. He knew at once: a murder has just been committed. And he saw the streak of half-dried blood on the dark ragged cuff.

And then he comprehended: it was not only that he would be recognized, and taken in and befriended by those, and only those, who saw his crime, all his life long. It was that they recognized him because of their own crimes.

And it was more: it was that he too would recognize all those, and only those, who had committed such violence against human spirit and flesh, such murder of assault or treachery against life, all his life long.

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a new story by

EDITORS' FILE CARD

AUTHOR:	**HUGH PENTECOST**
TITLE:	***Hector Is Willin'***
TYPE:	Courtroom Detective Story
DETECTIVE:	Uncle George Crowder
LOCALE:	Lakeview, U.S.A.
TIME:	The Present
COMMENTS:	*Prim and proper Hector Trimble—who would have thought it? Champagne and kisses in a hotel room with the luscious Lucille Latour! The trial was a small-town extravaganza . . .*

UNCLE GEORGE CROWDER HELD a match to the charred bowl of his pipe. "When a self-righteous man—which means a humorless man—is caught with his hypocrisy showing, it adds a kind of special zing to the cocktail sauce," he said. He glanced down at the small boy who sat on the front steps of Mrs. Toomey's restaurant with him. Joey Trimble, aged eleven, hugged his knees and wriggled in misery.

"Pop must not of read the fine print," he said.

"Possibly not," Uncle George said, with a small, happy smile. "It's a little hard to make it clear to you, Joey. But if a lady choir singer is caught having a romance with a church deacon it's a lot more pleasurable to the community at large than if she's caught romancing with a well-known Don Juan."

"Pop isn't a church deacon," Joey said.

"But it would be type casting," Uncle George said, "perfect type casting."

"And Miss Latour is no choir singer," Joey said.

"That," Uncle George said, "is certainly a solemn truth." He sighed, still happy. "Lucille Latour! An improbable name for anyone, my boy. For a choir singer I'd say it was downright unlikely. Now, third from the end in a Minsky extravaganza—"

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"What is a Minsky extravaganza, Uncle George?" Joey asked.

"Never mind—for about ten years," Uncle George said.

Uncle George Crowder had to hand it to his brother-in-law, Hector Trimble, who in addition to being Joey's father was also the local druggist. Hector was the stubbornest damn fool in his self-righteousness Uncle George had ever encountered. No man would go through what Hector had gone through in court that morning unless he was a damn fool. No man would allow himself to be so ridiculed or permit his self-respect to be japed at so cruelly except a mutton-headed do-gooder like Hector.

Uncle George, biting his lower lip to keep from guffawing out loud, had sat in the back of the courtroom watching Miss Lucille Latour and her lawyer, Connaway, a smart cookie from upstate. Miss Latour's heavily mascaraed eyes had stared at Hector in wonderment. She was winning her case in court—which was the last thing in the world she wanted to do. With each step forward Mr. Connaway would stare at Hector in dazed disbelief, then turn to the judge, old Horace Partridge.

"This is most unusual, Your Honor," Connaway said. "The defendant refuses to be represented by counsel. He freely admits the disputed signature is his and at the same time stubbornly denies his obligation to my client. This man has a wife and adolescent son," Connaway said, his voice seeming to tremble with emotion. "I see them here in the courtroom. Must they be put to shame by this man's stubborn insistence that every detail of his scandalous behavior be made public? It could be so easily settled in your chambers, Your Honor."

Old Horace glared down at Hector from the bench. "Well, what about it, Hector?" he asked. "You heard Mr. Connaway's suggestion. If you admit the disputed signature is yours there ain't much to this, you know. No use to wash all the rest of the laundry here in public."

Hector, his face dead-white, his back ramrod straight, faced the bench. "I cannot deny the signature, Your Honor," Hector said, "though I do deny knowingly affixing it to that option to buy my business-front property. I do not deny other facts presented here, such as my presence in this lady's hotel room for two hours on the day claimed; I do not deny ordering a bottle of wine; I cannot deny the fact of lipstick smears on my shirt collar; but I *do* deny all the implications drawn from those facts! All I ask for is justice, Your Honor—simple justice."

Uncle George, listening to the case, glancing from time to time at the impassive face of his sister and the anxious concern exhibited by his nephew, had to pinch himself

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to believe it was all real. Hector, who was never wrong! Hector, who washed his hands twenty-five times a day! Hector, who wouldn't allow Joey to keep a dog because a vagrant hair might somehow transfer itself into someone's perscription! Hector, who worked and saved and had never been known to indulge in any kind of tom foolery! Hector, caught in the Delilah-like web of Miss Lucille Latour—it was a downright wonderful entertainment!

But Uncle George, who had been a topflight lawyer himself until he'd retired a few years back to devote himself to the business of hunting and fishing, thus acquiring from Hector the title of "lazy, good-for-nothing," had a feeling he was going to have to take a hand before the day was out—only because Joey would expect it of him. Uncle George would do almost anything for his young nephew.

It seemed that Miss Lucille Latour was the glamorous traveling saleswoman for a wholesale cosmetics firm. She had come to Lakeview to demonstrate the mysteries of vanishing creams, astringents, rouges, and perfumes to the ladies of our fair town. Her headquarters was Hector Trimble's up-to-date drug store.

For three days she held demonstrations in the store and had also gone to certain women's organizations. So skillful a saleswoman was she that it soon became apparent that Hector would be in the way of selling large quantities of her products.

On her fourth and last day in town Miss Latour suggested to Hector that he come to the hotel for lunch so that they could go over the order he was intending to place. Hector went. It was good business. He was surprised to find that Miss Latour had arranged to have luncheon served in her room, but she explained—and it was so—that all her sample cases were there, open and on display. It would be easier for Hector to go over things, item by item.

Hector had drawn up a large order and signed the order slip. Miss Latour had suggested this called for a celebration. She asked Hector to phone down for a bottle of wine, which he did. She was so pleased with the size of the order that she suddenly embraced Hector and kissed him fervently just as the bellboy appeared with the ice bucket and the champagne. That was Hector's story and it was Miss Latour's story too, as far as it went.

But Miss Latour, blushing modestly, went quite a bit further. It was Hector, she said, who had suggested the wine—and who could prove her wrong? He had phoned down for it, hadn't he? It was Hector who had initiated the impassioned love-making—and who could prove her wrong? The bellboy had actually witnessed one

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embrace, and the desk clerk had seen the lipstick smears on Hector's collar when he departed.

And who could disprove Miss Latour's final claim? Hector, she insisted, had been so infatuated with her that he had offered anything—but anything—to secure her future favors. He had suggested her opening a beauty shop here in Lakeview and had given her an option to purchase the lot next to his drug store at an absurdly low figure. It was this option that was now in question.

Hector swore he had never offered to sell the property, had never signed the option presented in evidence. But the signature was his—he couldn't deny that. When photographs of his signature on the cosmetics order and on the option were shown to Hector by Connaway, Hector couldn't tell one from the other. To nail down the lid on Hector's coffin, Mr. Connaway then demonstrated that the signatures were identical, down to the last curlicue on the *r* in *Hector*.

So, folks said, the old goat had been caught—but good. Why deny it? Why drag the whole thing out in public? Why let it become public knowledge that Hector's prim exterior covered the palpitating heart of an old lecher? It was really delightful. Wasn't Hector's own favorite comment about local gossip, "Well, where there's smoke there's fire!"?

In the noon recess Uncle George sat down on the front steps of Mrs. Toomey's lunchroom to smoke his pipe and to muse on the wonders of man's stupidity. It was then that Joey joined him. Joey was suffering shame, and that made the old man wince.

"Mom says can you do anything, Uncle George?" Joey asked.

"Your mother wants me to help—is that it, Joey?"

"She says Pop's taken enough. Now he should be helped."

"She doesn't believe all that stuff about your Pop?"

Joey scowled at his dusty shoes. "She says somebody tried to sell him the Brooklyn Bridge and he's too stubborn to admit he could have been flimflammed. But now he's had enough, she said for me to tell you."

It was then that Uncle George made his assorted comments about self-righteousness, choir singers, deacons, and Minsky's. "You tell your Mom I'll have him home for an afternoon cup of tea, only she'll have to persuade him to accept me as his lawyer. You know how he feels about me, Joey."

"Mom said to tell you she's already told Pop what the score is," Joey said. "She said to tell you that 'Barkis is willin.' What's that mean, Uncle George?"

"It means your old man has had the bewadding scared out of him," Uncle George said.

The little courtroom in the Lake-

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view Town Hall was packed to the rafters after lunch. Word had got round that Uncle George was going to appear for the defendant. His rare court cases always provided luscious entertainment, but the spectacle of him defending Hector Trimble, who'd never had anything good to say about Uncle George, only added to the richness of the dessert.

"I trust you will pardon the informality of my attire, Your Honor," Uncle George began after lunch. His high laced boots, his tan breeches, the worn corduroy hunting jacket and the plaid sports shirt were not, to be sure, usual attire for counsel. Judge Horace Partridge didn't give a hoot about Uncle George's attire. The appearance of Uncle George presaged fireworks. Judge Partridge looked into Uncle George's pale blue eyes, then turned away quickly. These two were old cronies and the judge saw mischief and merriment ahead.

"After consultation with my client we would like, with the court's permission, to alter some of our testimony."

"It was given under oath!" Judge Partridge snapped.

"But before consultation with counsel," Uncle George said. "For example, Your Honor, my client has denied having any amorous interest in the gorgeous Miss Latour." Uncle George bowed at Miss Latour, an almost wistful expression on his face. "Now no man with an ounce of juice left in his system could look at Miss Latour and not feel stirrings of some sort! So we no longer deny that Miss Latour has attractions. To avoid further argument we are also prepared to concede that it was the defendant who, after plying the charming lady with wine, initiated an assault on Miss Latour's susceptibilities. In short, we concede for purposes of hastening the proceedings, that the defendant, Hector Trimble, felt himself unduly affected by Miss Latour's charms—just as I suspect every other red-blooded man in this courtroom has been affected by her." Again Uncle George bowed graciously at Miss Latour. "But as you have yourself pointed out, Your Honor, the nub of this case is the signature on the option to buy the defendent's property on Main Street. The defendent has conceded the signature was his, even though he denied knowingly having signed an option agreement. We now wish to alter that testimony, Your Honor, and deny flatly that the signature on the option *is* the defendant's."

"Now hold on, Mr. Crowder!" Mr. Connaway, for Miss Latour, had rolled up out of his chair. "Deny it or not, the defendant was unable to distinguish one signature from the other. As a matter of fact, I suggest the court inform Mr. Crowder, in case he hasn't all the facts, that we have proved conclusively that the signature on

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the option and the signature on the order form are identical."

Uncle George shook his head dubiously. "You're sure of that, Mr. Connaway? You're sure the signatures are identical?"

"Absolutely identical," Mr. Connaway said.

"If the plaintiff's attorney is prepared to concede that fact." Uncle George began, a little uncertainly.

"I not only concede it, I claim it!" Mr. Connaway smiled indulgently.

Uncle George turned to the bench. "And that's my case, Your Honor—in a nutshell. I move the action against the defendant be dismissed on the ground that he couldn't possibly have signed the option agreement."

Old Horace Partridge looked down from the bench at Uncle George and there was a curious gleam in his faded eyes.

"I have been on the verge, Mr. Crowder, of halting these proceedings and finding in favor of the plaintiff because of the sheer stupidity shown by your client, the defendant. Is it possible that at last we are to make some sense out of this affair?"

"I trust we shall, Your Honor," Uncle George said gravely. "It becomes necessary, however, for me to admit further shortcomings on the part of my client."

"Oh?"

"He does not read, or permit his family to read, what he calls 'trash'," Uncle George said in a melancholy voice. "Included in what my client classifies as trash is the entire literature of crime and the detection thereof."

The judge, his eyes twinkling, shook his head and made a clucking sound.

"Thus," said Uncle George, "my client is unaware of a simple fact that every devotee of mystery fiction has been aware of for many years. To cite an early example, Your Honor—a story by E. W. Hornung."

"Forty to fifty years ago, if it's a day!" Old Horace beamed.

"Quite right, Your Honor—in *The Crime Doctor,*" Uncle George beamed back.

"The detective having been Doctor John Dollar," Old Horace added.

Uncle George nodded vigorously, then went on. "The device or gimmick I am referring to has been used by every detective story writer who has ever written about forged documents—from Ellery Queen to the most obscure beginner."

Mr. Connaway rose. "Your Honor, interesting as this exchange between Your Honor and counsel for the defense may be to the bibliophiles present, I suggest we come back from the world of fiction to the world of fact. The signature on the option is identical with the defendant's admitted signature on the order form. This is

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acknowledged by counsel. The defendant's cultural background or lack of it, seems to me to be irrelevant and immaterial."

"With Your Honor's permission?" Uncle George purred.

"Please," said Old Horace, almost smacking his lips.

Uncle George turned and gestured to someone in the audience. Little Joey Trimble appeared carrying a small package. He brought it down the aisle and placed it on the counsel table at Uncle George's elbow. Uncle George opened it and produced a half dozen pads of plain paper and a half dozen ball point pens.

"With Your Honor's permission," he said, "I should now like to address my remarks to Mr. Connaway and Miss Latour, since Your Honor has made it clear that you are thoroughly familiar with the nub of the matter."

"Permission granted," Old Horace said, the glitter in his faded eyes even brighter than before.

"Well, Mr. Connaway—and Miss Latour—" Uncle George bowed slightly toward the lady, "this has been a most interesting day. I have watched your combined antics in this court with admiration. I dare say this is the first time you have been confronted with a victim who would not eagerly have settled this little shakedown out of court. My client's stupid gallantry—or perhaps I should say, gallant stupidity—has forced you into a corner, Mr. Connaway—and you too, Miss Latour. Presented with the evidence of identical signatures, my client was expected to settle out of court—buying back the alleged option for a tidy sum and keeping his name clear of scandal. But my client backfired on you."

"Objection!" Mr. Connaway shouted.

"Overruled. Proceed, Mr. Crowder," Old Horace said happily.

"Now, Mr. Connaway—and Miss Latour—you concede that the signatures are identical. I therefore make you an offer. My client agrees to honor that option argument—he agrees not only to honor it but to give the property to Miss Latour free and clear and without charge —"

"George!" Hector Trimble wailed. He was on his feet.

"Silence!" Old Horace bellowed, pounding the bench with his gavel.

"Free and clear and without charge," Uncle George repeated, "*provided* you, Mr. Connaway, or you, Miss Latour, or anyone in this courtroom or in this town or, as a matter of fact, in all these United States, can write two identical signatures. I suggest you try it here and now. And failing here, I suggest you spend the next couple of years, which you will undoubtedly spend in jail for attempting to shake down my client, trying it. You thought no man would be such a fool as to go through what

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ny client has gone through here. You thought he'd be glad to pay a ew thousand dollars to buy back hat option just to keep this fiddle-addle about romance from being rought to light."

Mr. Connaway reached like a leepwalker for one of the pads. Game to the end, Uncle George hought.

"Try, Mr. Connaway, but I tell ou in advance it's impossible. The nly way two signatures can be *xactly* alike is *for one to be traced rom the other!* It is no more pos-ible for two signatures to be iden-ical than for the fingerprints of wo people to be identical. That ignature on the option agreement s a tracing—it has to be to match ie signature on the order blank xactly. If my client," and Uncle George looked sadly at Hector Trimble, "had not stunted his read-ing habits since childhood, he would have told you to go fly a kite when you showed him two identical signatures."

Uncle George turned back to-ward the bench, leaving Mr. Con-naway to stare dully at the top page of the pad before him, now filled with his own obviously dif-ferent signatures.

Uncle George grinned at the judge and spoke in a voice low enough to be covered by the grow-ing laughter in the courtroom. "Horace, I wouldn't have missed trying this case for anything. The vision of my client in the embrace of the fair Lucille has added years to my life."

Only Uncle George could hear the judge's reply: "And thank the good Lord for detective stories!"

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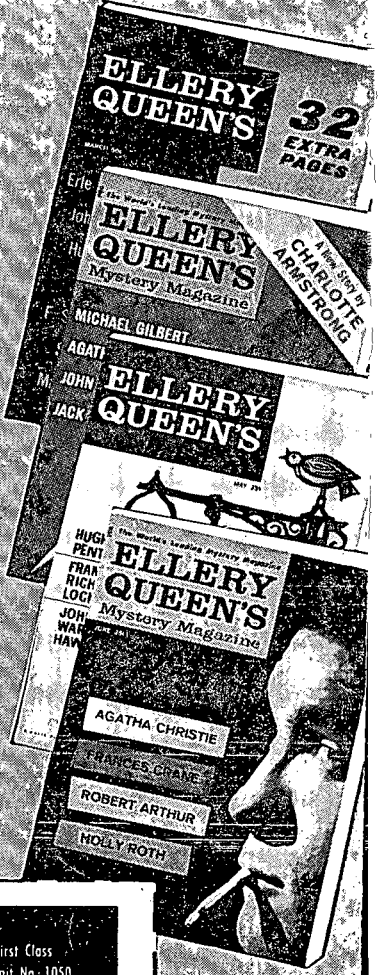

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